No. 56

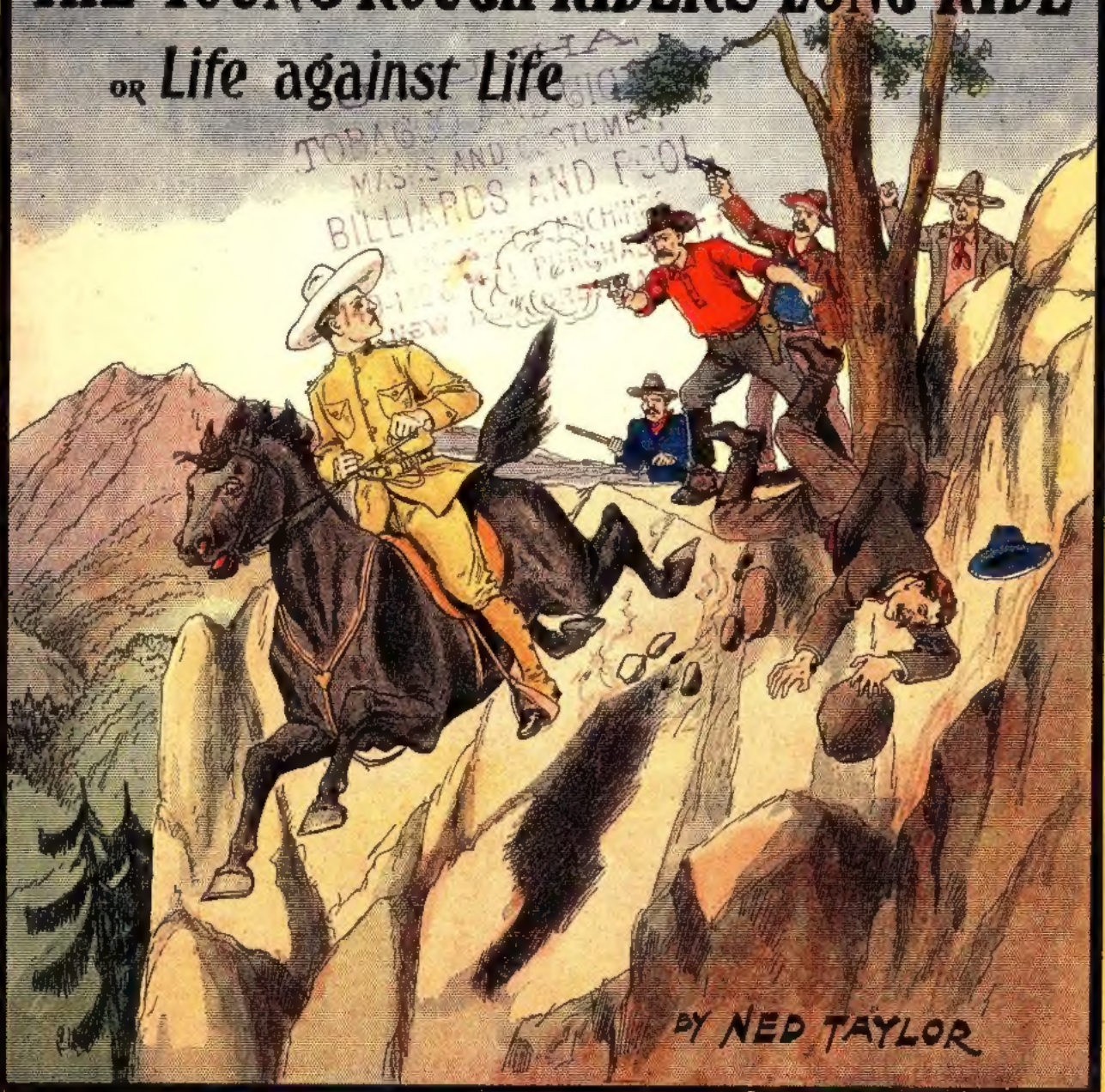
5 CENTS

Young Rough Riders Weekly

MOST FASCINATING WESTERN STORIES

THE YOUNG ROUGH RIDER'S LONG RIDE

OR Life against Life



When Black Bess was speeding like an arrow through the air, a dozen armed men sprang into Ted's pathway, commanding him to stop.

The Young Rough Riders Weekly

Most Fascinating Western Stories

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1905, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by STREET & SMITH, *70-80 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Application made at the N. Y. Post Office for entry as Second-class Matter.*

No. 56. NEW YORK, May 13, 1905. Price Five Cents.

The Young Rough Rider's Long Ride;

OR,

LIFE AGAINST LIFE.

By NED TAYLOR.

CHAPTER I.

CRIME AND MYSTERY.

The great pine which stood at the entrance to Sosoon Valley, like a giant sentinel long upon duty there, had stood motionless for more than an hour.

The creatures that came and went in and out of the thick growth skirting the road at the foot of this forest king had likewise dropped into silence and inactivity.

Even the song of the noisy brook, brawling over its rocky course, had seemed to become subdued in its mirth, as if that, too, had fallen under the spell of the quiet autumn afternoon.

Up at the little mountain hamlet, within sight, no one was astir.

For a brief while the big sign of River Rube, with its faded letters, trying vainly to tell the stranger that this was a haven where he might find rest and solace from the fatigues of travel, ceased to give forth its melancholy call, under the ceaseless sway of the west wind constantly rushing up the narrow pass.

It was told around the camp fires for many a year that the wind and the devil had once met there and, falling into a discussion, each had dared the other to go further up the valley, where it was said dwelt the spirit of the spotless soul, believed in by the red man.

The devil laughingly accepted the challenge, upon the condition that the wind wait for him until he should return.

This the wind promised to do, and the devil started up the valley whistling merrily, it was said, to keep up his courage.

Upon his way he came to River Rube's saloon and tavern, only it was kept by some other Rube, and, being very thirsty, he went in for a drink to cheer him upon his way.

Either the liquor found here was too strong for him or he found the company so enjoyable that he could not break from it, for the devil never came out.

So the west wind still waits and watches for him at Sosoon Pass, whistling to keep up its own courage during its long service.

But at last, for a little while at least, it had been caught napping. Not a breath lingered among the old familiar scenes.

Inside his hospice River Rube was napping, too.

But this was nothing unusual for him, so there could have been no connection in the matter between him and the wind.

He knew Hank Webber was soon due with his stage from Shooter's Bluff, and that there would be a busy half hour for him then.

The inhabitants of this mining settlement also knew this, and possibly they, too, were waiting patiently for the moment to come when excitement should begin its brief reign.

"Hank's 'bout to Bliffer's Bend," remarked old Joe McQuestion, consulting his big, battered timekeeper. "I hope he won't fergit thet terbacker."

Though unnoticed by a living soul in Sosoon, at that moment, the pine lifted one of its dark green fingers, for all the world as a human being would when about to admonish silence.

The west wind suddenly awoke, or perhaps it had awakened before, and, like a schoolboy who abruptly remembers that he has forgotten to do the errand intrusted to him, shook its invisible hand in the direction his satanic majesty had taken so long ago.

But if the wind and the pine were unheeded, another element—the element of sound—aroused every soul in Sosoon.

It was the clatter of many hoofs ringing up the valley, as if a body of horse was sweeping upon the scene at a terrific pace.

The transformation of the picture was instantaneous.

Men and women suddenly appeared upon the streets, which only a moment before had been barren of any signs of life.

Faces appeared at the little windows of the rough cabins lining either side of the street, and eyes framed in countenances of white and bronze looked anxiously down the road.

River Rube quickly started up and hastened with uncertain steps toward the bar.

"Hank is ahead of time to-day," declared a bearded, red-shirted miner, looking pleased at the thought of what was to come.

"Well he might, driving at that terrible rate," said another.

"Hank's never driv in like thet but onc't, and thet was when he'd been hild up at the Crossin' and Jim Peters knocked out."

" 'Pears 's 'f he wuz comin' faster 'n' faster!" remarked a fourth, his mouth so full of his favorite chew that he could not articulate half of the sounds of speech.

When first heard, the stage must have been a mile away, but inside of two minutes the sounds of its mad advance had become so clear and distinct that the eager listeners looked for its appearance in sight at any moment.

The street was now thronged with excited, expectant spectators, who were looking for what they could not foretell.

That there was reason for all that unusual clatter not one did doubt.

While Hank Webber was noted for his ability to make good time, and on two or three occasions had shown that no horse could shirk under his hands, he was not a reckless driver.

He loved his horses too well to abuse them by unnecessary output of strength.

Despite this, he could prove that he had never come in at his destination behind time through any fault of his or his horses.

To-day he was fifteen minutes ahead of time.

Yet he had never been known to come up the valley at such a pace.

With that grim foreboding which usually denotes trouble, the anxious watchers felt that something had gone wrong to-day.

River Rube, an uncommon thing for him to do, left his bar untended to appear in the doorway, that he might better watch the incoming of the Sosoon stage.

"Hank's swinging around the bend," said one, his words affording some relief for his pent-up feelings.

"There he swings!" yelled another, throwing his hat into the air.

A cloud of dust could now be discerned by one of the sharp-eyed men lining the distant roadway.

It must mark the situation of the stage.

Still the speaker was the only one who could delude himself into thinking he had seen the lumbering vehicle.

But the noise and the thunder of its oncoming was now so loud that it could not be far away.

A moment later and an indistinct form came from out of the dust-laden space.

It was the expected stage!

It was still gaining upon time.

"Must be the horses hev got away from Hank," spoke up a bystander.

"Nope. There's Hank on his seat as peart as a young rooster. No hoss is goin' to gin Hank the break-away."

Others saw that the speaker was right, and while certain ones felt a feeling of relief to know that the driver was there safe, this fact removed largely the interest in the matter.

"Likely 'nough Hank has taken a drop too much. Guess we've got s'cited over nothin'."

Still the crowd continued to watch the approach of the stage, the four stout horses drawing it, plunging ahead at a terrific gait.

Erect in his seat sat the driver, but, as the onlookers were soon to discover, the reins streamed out in the air, untouched by hand of his.

Ay, he sat there as composed as a mummy.

Never had driver driven into Sosoon under such a manner.

" 'Pears like he don't pay any heed to th' hosses."

"Jumpin' gewhillikins!" cried another, "he ain't got foot on brake nor hand on rein."

"Hank's playin' some joke. Mebbe he wants to show us th' hosses can go without his hand."

"There's something wrong. Hank ain't in his right min'."

"Mebbe he's gone mad, and don't keer fer matters."

" 'Tain't thet!"

But the last offered no solution to the mystery.

Unmindful of all the excitement and wonder they were causing, the maddened horses continued to sweep on, their sides covered with sweat and foam, and their nostrils aquiver with excitement.

Straight up the street they leaped, the clumsy coach swaying from side to side as if it would be overturned at every bound of the steeds.

"Zounds! glad I ain't a-ridin' in th' concern," ejaculated one.

Hank Webber never failed to stop at River Rube's tavern, and now, with an abruptness startling to witness, the horses drew up in front of this building, snorting, puffing like so many engines letting off surplus steam.

The spectators now made a wild dash forward, each anxious to be first upon the spot, as if this was their divine right.

Hank Webber maintained his seat, turning neither to the right or left, nor deigning to look down upon the amazed crowd.

One, more prompt of action than the rest, quickly climbed up beside the grizzled driver.

At sight of the cold eyes which looked down into his, and the touch of the clammy hand which rested limp by his side, the bold adventurer uttered an exclamation of horror, managing to add:

"Hank's dead as a stone!"

CHAPTER II.

A DYING MAN'S CONFESSION.

The startling announcement, which had been anticipated by many of those present, brought forth murmurs of horror.

"Air ye sure, Ben?" asked one, loath to believe the truth. "He sets monstrous straight fer a dead man."

"See! he's tied to th' seat," explained another.

"Hank's run into a nest o' road agents!"

This was certainly a natural conclusion to reach. Yet none of the daring desperadoes who had been infesting the country had ever taken the pains to perform such a strange act.

"Cut away the ropes and bring Hank inter my shebang," spoke up River Rube. "I never had a better customer 'n Hank. He always brought the trade my way."

Now that the first impression of horror had somewhat passed, some of the bystanders cut away the cords that bound the dead driver so firmly to his seat, and the limp form was lowered down from its high perch with such feelings of tenderness as a stranger might not have looked for from those rough exteriors.

"Hank was white," declared one.

"Never went back on a friend," said another.

"He was true blue," added a third. "It'll be hard to find his equal."

"Don't 'pear to be any galoots in th' hearse," remarked a fourth, crowding himself forward so as to look inside the coach.

"Uv coorse there ain't. Road agents don't ginerally leave so much as a ghost fer thet bizness."

"By chimbly rock on the Platte!" cried a tall, brawny

miner, whose great height enabled him to look over the shoulders of the others, "there is some one in th' hearse. He looks like a cops, too."

This announcement, perhaps more than the discovery of the death of the driver, stirred the onlookers and awakened their excitement to such a pitch that there was a furious rush to get nearer, so as to see if the truth had been spoken.

In the midst of this rush and bustle, a clear, ringing voice rang upon the scene:

"Stand back there and give those in front a chance to investigate the matter."

The sound of this voice instantly changed the scene.

The crowd glanced up to find that three horsemen had ridden upon the scene without having attracted the attention of anyone.

It was the leader who had spoken, and, mounted upon a coal-black steed, he presented a striking appearance, though a youth in years.

He was dressed in a natty uniform of khaki cloth, girthed about the waist with a web belt, the receptacle for a pair of Colt revolvers, and a row of cartridges.

Over his back was slung a serviceable repeating rifle.

With a calmness that was a part of his nature he sat in his seat in the spirit of a born leader.

Some one recognized him, and he cried out:

"It's Ted Strong, the young rough rider!"

This was very true, the young rider having just reached Sosoon, with the intention of spending a few days here before going to the south, where other interests called for his attention.

With him were his faithful friends and companions, stout, honest Ben Tremont and nimble, strong-hearted Bud Morgan.

Like their young leader, this twain were clothed in uniforms of khaki cloth, and like him were well mounted.

Ben in particular bestrode a powerful horse of a blood-bay color, which promised great speed as well as a capacity to endure a long and hard journey.

The command of the young rough rider was obeyed with respectful order, and then the door of the stage was opened.

The tall miner reached into the coach and wound his long, strong arms about the silent passenger, who lay upon the bottom of the vehicle apparently lifeless.

"Reckon Jim don't need no help," said one of those who had stepped forward to assist in the care of the body of the unfortunate man.

Then the spectators fell back, so as to allow the big bearer of the silent figure to pass into the tavern.

"'Pears like," said Jim, while he laid with almost womanly tenderness the form of the stranger upon a bench brought forward, "there's a leetle warmth in his body."

"He lives!" cried another.

"He is not dead!" supplemented a companion.

Ted Strong had dismounted from Black Bess and pushed his way into the building, the crowd giving way cheerfully to the young rough rider.

Taking one of the stranger's hands in his, Ted quickly made an examination of the injured man, who was a person past middle life, with a countenance that showed he had seen his share of the hardships of a life on the frontier.

"There is a little spark of vitality left," said the young rough rider. "Give me a little spirits. It is possible he may revive enough to tell us what has taken place below here.

Then Ted moistened the lips and bathed the brow of the unconscious man, who soon began to show signs of returning life.

Soon the lids of his eyes were seen to quiver, and then they lifted, when he looked up with a dazed expression on his countenance, as his gaze met that of the young rough rider.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a husky tone.

"Safe from harm, sir," replied Ted." You have reached Sosoon."

"I am almost home," he murmured. "How long can I live?"

"Not long, my friend," said Ted, who was busy examining his injuries. "You have got a bad bullet wound here in the left side, and another nearer your heart. Either would be sufficient to finish you, I am sorry to say."

"No need to be sorry for me, mister. I took life into my hands, and I must pay the penalty, I suppose. But I must not waste the little strength I have. Lift my head a little higher."

Ted did as he was requested, and made the sufferer as comfortable as he could.

"That'll do, mister. Was Hank killed?"

"Yes," answered Ted.

"I'm sorry for him. Hank was true blue, and he did the best he could for me. But Black Dave was too smart for both of us. Say, have you seen anything of the girl?"

"No, sir. Explain the situation. Tell us all you can in as few words as possible."

The young rough rider could see that the power of speech would not long be given the man. He was nearly done with this life.

"I will do as you say, sir. But first I want you to get a justice of the peace as soon as you can."

"I am a justice, and can transact any business you wish."

Turning to River Rube he said:

"Get me pen, ink and paper as soon as possible."

"Who are you?" asked the dying man.

"Ted Strong, better known, perhaps, as the young rough rider."

"I have heard him speak of you. There is no man in the world I should rather meet at this time than you, though a week ago I might have told a different story. But a little while often makes a great change."

"I would advise you to use your strength sparingly. What is your name?"

"Guy Stoneman, Ted Strong. I have been a tough character in my day. But I have no time to speak now of more than one of my many crimes. There is one I must speak of, even if it is to curse my memory."

"Go on," encouraged Ted. "And who is it you have heard speak of me?"

"His name is Arthur Blake, and at this moment he is under sentence of death for a crime I committed."

"I know him well as a true, noble friend. Where is Arthur Blake now?"

"Behind prison bars, in Sacramento, convicted of murder."

"But Arthur Blake is not a murderer. Go on with your confession. I have paper, and will write it down as you talk."

The young rough rider had no wish to allow any delay that should rob him of the result of what he half anticipated was to follow.

"It was a miserable scheme, and Black Dave Ansell was at the bottom of it. He wanted old man Brookhouse's money, and, what made us more trouble than this, he wanted his adopted daughter, also.

"She and Arthur, who were brother and sister, were really a niece and nephew of the old man, and were expected to share his money together when he was gone.

"But Dave laid the darkest plot you ever knew to get her and the money. He brought about a quarrel, by telling a string of lies, between the old man and Arthur, and then hired me to kill him.

"Drunk with the whisky he had given me, I consented upon the payment of a thousand dollars.

"One dark night I went to the old man's home, and while he slept struck the terrible blow.

"It happened so that before I could get out of the house Arthur came, as I now believe to ask the old man's forgiveness for his hasty words. Finding that he had retired, he sought him in his chamber, to find him before his body was cold.

"I managed to arouse the household and, with others, to surprise Arthur while he was in the act of drawing the knife from the wound that I had driven home with a demon's power.

"Then he was dragged into court; the quarrel he had had with the old man was brough up and, in spite of all he could say, through my statements and the others he was convicted of the crime.

"In time Dave sought Clara Blake to renew his wooing. But she, half believing, I suspect, the truth, scornfully refused him. Seeing he could not get her by fair means, he resorted to foul. Again I was made his tool. On the payment of another thousand I abducted her and left for a place of concealment, expecting she would consent to marry him upon finding that she was in his power.

"But he counted with his game left out. He ordered her removed to more distant quarters, and I was intrusted with her charge.

"The man who can be bought to do one crime can be persuaded to do another, or to undo in part what he has done. So it was with me. I finally took pity on poor Clara Blake and tried to save her. I took her in a different direction from that laid out by Dave.

"He must have suspected me, for it was not long before he was hot on my trail. In vain did I try to throw him off, and at last I found myself, with Miss Blake, on our way through the mountains up here. Knowing that the day of Arthur's sentence was drawing near, she was wild with grief.

"I could not hope to save him, with Dave Ansell still hot on my track. We did get to Blind Man's Acre, and started upon the stage with Hank Webber for this place.

"Less than an hour ago, while we were passing a lonely spot, on the road, when I supposed Dave and his tools were a hundred miles away, they pounced down upon us. Hank Webber was shot down like a dog at the outset, and I fell doing my best to defend Miss Blake. Let that be

said to my credit. But it was useless. After killing me, as he believed, Dave decamped with her a captive.

"His men, as a huge joke, fixed up Hank as you found him and sent the horses flying on their homeward journey. I fainted, and so know nothing of that terrible ride—my last this side of the grave."

Here the speaker paused, completely worn out.

"Give me a little more whisky," said the young rough rider. "He must live to sign this paper and give me a few more particulars."

Guy Stoneman opened his eyes as Ted spoke, and upon swallowing a good draught of the liquor revived somewhat.

"Yes, give me the pen," he said feebly. "I must sign it, for it will clear an honest man's name of the stigma of a crime he never committed."

Then he wrote in a trembling, wandering hand his signature.

"Some of you witness this," appealed Ted to the spectators. "You have heard what he has said, and if called upon will be expected to swear to it in court."

Half a dozen gladly affixed their names to the dying man's confession.

CHAPTER III.

A FIVE-HUNDRED-MILE RIDE.

"When does Arthur Blake's sentence expire?" asked the young rough rider.

"He will hang at ten o'clock Friday," replied the other.

"This week?" demanded Ted, with increasing earnestness.

"Yes."

"I am afraid this has come too late to save him."

"I know it, but you can clear his name of the dishonor of the crime?"

"I must do more than that—I must save an innocent life. Why haven't you done this before?"

"Couldn't bring myself to take the risk while my grip on life was good. It is easier when you find yourself losing your hold. You will try and save her?" he continued, showing great anxiety in his voice.

"Yes. But I must not lose sight of my duty to save her brother."

"You cannot do that. It is more than six hundred miles to Sacramento."

"I know it. How far is it to the nearest telegraph station?"

He could not answer this.

Some of those present suggested it was three hundred miles.

"It is nearer five hundred miles," said River Rube.

"I am afraid you are right," acknowledged Ted. "As I remember it, Benson Landing is the nearest from this direction, and Gat's Claim is two hundred miles this side.

"How far is it to Gat's?"

"Nearly three hundred miles."

"And a rough country to ride through."

"By crossing over Kilton's Range you can lop off fifty miles."

"To find only a bridle path, with a good chance to run foul at any time."

"Th' hull thing can't be did, Kilton's or no Kilton's."

Unheeding such comments as these, the young rough rider turned to his friends, who had remained silent spectators of the scene.

"Ben and Bud, I must make a desperate effort to save Arthur Blake. I know I can depend upon you to help me."

"That you can, Ted, to the last."

"Jumpin' sandhills!" exclaimed Bud, "I'd count it the best fun of my life to ride down to Sacramento, if 'tis five hundred miles."

"I may not have to ask you to take such a tremendous ride, Bud. Some one has got to look after Miss Blake. I think I shall have to let Ben and you do that."

Bud showed his disappointment, but quickly agreed to this arrangement.

Ben had already done so.

"It is now Tuesday afternoon," declared Ted, "and consequently I have less than three days in which to make this long ride of nearly five hundred miles.

"Fremont rode from Los Angeles to Monterey and back again, a distance of eight hundred miles, in six days, not counting two days of rest. He had six lead horses to take their turn under the saddle when one got tired. If I had three extra horses I believe I could make this trip to Benson, and get there in season to telegraph on to the sheriff to stop the execution until I get there with this man's confession."

"It is a fearful undertaking, Ted," said Ben.

"Yet it must be done. I should never forgive myself if I allowed Arthur to die without doing my best to save him."

"When Ted Strong does his best he usually wins," said Bud. "I wish I could go with you."

"I thank you for your interest, but you can do me more good by remaining to look after Miss Blake.

"But this will not do. Every moment is precious. Look around, boys, and see what you can find for horses, while I make such preparations as I can for the journey. I must start inside of half an hour."

"Looks like the man wants to say sumthin' to ye," remarked a bystander, referring to the dying man.

Ben and Bud immediately began to look after horses for their companion's long ride, while he turned to the side of Stoneman.

"You'll do your best to save her?" he asked. "It was for her I did this. She is good and beautiful. I loved her, and if she had looked with more favor on me I would have forsaken everything else for her. But this is all I can do, giving my life for her. I think Dave took the back trail after he captured her, but he'll run to cover the moment he finds he is pursued."

"Anything more to say of her brother?"

"Only that he is innocent. I have done all I could for him. I am sorry he must die so."

"Regrets are vain. Tell me the best way to reach Benson's Landing," said Ted.

"Do you think of going there?"

"Answer my question, Guy Stoneman. I haven't a moment to lose."

"The best way for you to go is to follow down Sosoon Valley as far as Painter's Lick, then cross over the divide into Lone Ranch Range, and follow the river for fifty miles, but be sure to keep to the right. The left will lead you into a wilderness of desert. The other is hilly, but it is better. That will be the hardest part of your trip, but when you strike the Carson trail you will have one hundred miles as straight as the nose on your face, and smooth as a floor. Then you'll come to Gat's Claim, and if you don't keep a clear head you'll get tangled up, I——"

Here the speaker was taken with a coughing fit which nearly strangled him.

"See that he has good care, and is properly buried," said Ted. "I must be getting ready to start."

"We'll look arter him," volunteered River Rube.

"Say, rough rider, the best hoss in Sosoon is owned by Boston Cad, but he won't part with him for love nor money."

"Thank you," and the young rough rider left the tavern to prepare for the work before him.

Black Bess, on whom he must depend for one of his steeds, was quietly feeding by the side of the street.

"Come here, Bess," he called.

The obedient mare quickly obeyed, and as she laid her head against him he said, softly:

"I am sorry, my queen, that I must put you to such a test, but it is life for life. I must save Arthur Blake, though I shall have to sacrifice you, the best friend I ever had."

She whinnied softly, as if she understood and acquiesced in what he had said.

"God bless you!" murmured her young master. "If I had two more as good as you, I would risk my chances."

Ted then looked to his trappings, removing everything that he could possibly spare, and saw that the girths were firm and strong.

"It is fortunate you have not been driven far or fast to-day, my dear," talking to her as he might have done to a sweetheart.

"Hello, Ben; what success?"

"None to boast of, Ted. I have got on track of two good horses, but not extraordinary ones. No common horse is going to do for you. Bud has gone to see one that is highly recommended, but it is not believed the owner will part with it."

"Let no money consideration stand between us if you think the animal is what I need."

"Ted, I have been thinking about my horse. He's a good one—not as good as Bess, but I do not think you can find his equal in this place. You are welcome to him, Ted. One of those we can pick up will do for me, you know."

"I had thought of that, Ben. Perhaps we had better count the bay as one. He is used to long, hard drives, and if there is a horse besides Bess that can go one hundred and fifty miles a day for three days, it is yours."

"Take him, Ted. You cannot do better."

It now remained to find only one horse for Ted.

But it proved that even this could not be secured—such a horse as would do for the young rough rider to take.

Bud's iron-gray was better than any animal that was in Sosoon, and thus Ted decided to take him along.

Both Ben and Bud found animals that were good, and which they were glad to obtain under the circumstances.

With Guy Stoneman's dying confession placed safely in one of his pockets, the young rough rider swung himself into the saddle of Black Bess and headed down the valley upon the first stage of his long ride.

At that moment the self-confessed murderer was breathing his last.

There was nothing to keep them longer in Sosoon, and Ben and Bud prepared to start with Ted, intending to keep along with him until they should reach the place where Black Dave Ansell and his gang had waylaid the stage.

"Good luck to ye, Ted Strong!" called out one of the bystanders.

"May ye live to get through to Benson!" said another.

"Can't be done," said half a dozen in the same breath.

But the hardy inhabitants of Sosoon liked the display of pluck exhibited by these youthful strangers, who had come and gone out of their lives so suddenly, and a storm of hats was flung high into the air.

Loud cheers rang out, giving inspiration to the bold riders as they swept down the mountain road.

The three turned back to answer the welcoming cries, and the next moment they vanished from the sight of the crowd.

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN'S WILD RIDE.

The young rough rider led the way, closely followed by his extra horses.

Behind these followed Ben, and then Bud.

On account of the narrowness of the road it was not thought best to ride abreast.

Then there was another reason for moving in single file.

While Ted had no intention of pushing his horses at the outset, and thus exhausting them before his long journey was complete, it was soon apparent that the horses ridden by Ben and Bud would not be able to keep up with those in front very long.

There was really no need that they should do this, and the young rough rider had resolved to bend every energy toward accomplishing his Herculean feat.

Benson must be reached before Friday at nine o'clock, at all sacrifices in other directions.

He had already calculated upon his chances, and mentally laid his plans.

He felt confident that his horses would be able to make twelve miles an hour for twelve and one-half hours a day.

This would give them six hours this afternoon, covering a distance of seventy-five miles.

That night they would be allowed nine hours of rest and recuperation.

Then, by starting early in the morning, they could make seventy-five miles the following forenoon, and rest during midday for three hours.

This plan was to be followed until the end of the trip, as nearly as it could on account of circumstances.

He had decided to change horses every hour, thus at no stage of his ride to overdo an animal.

"If I meet with no serious delay I can make it," he thought, as he swept on at his flying gait. He was now riding Black Bess, and never, it seemed to him, did she seem in better spirits.

"Ah, my queen," he said, patting her neck, "for your sake I wish it was the last instead of the first stage. But I will treat you as best I can."

Glancing back, he saw that he was already leaving his friends behind.

"It would be folly for them to try to keep up with me, and more foolish for me to allow them to do so."

Then, waving his hand to them, he touched Black Bess lightly, when the fleet-footed mare settled down to earnest work.

The next minute he lost sight of them, the last that he saw being a farewell wave of the hand from Ben.

"Noble fellows," he thought; "they will do all in their power to save the girl. I could not leave her fate in better hands."

"The young rough rider was now fairly started upon his tremendous ride.

So far, he had found the way comparatively smooth, with a descendent grade, broken at intervals by slight elevations. As he kept on, the valley broadened, as the mountains moved further and further away, trending off so as to form a mighty V on the landscape.

Two tributary streams had joined the noisy little river running through Sosoon, and now it could claim the dignity of being an important waterway.

On the left hand, as he rode on and on, stretched a belt of plain, growing broader and broader as he kept ahead, the road following closer to the mountains.

In fact, at the end of an hour he had so far left the bank of the river that he could no longer hear the grumbling of its rapids.

He had begun upon his second hour out from Sosoon, and he had exchanged Black Bess for the bay, when he came upon a bend in the road, where overhanging cliffs frowned down upon him, to discover certain indications of a recent struggle having taken place here.

"Where Black Dave held up the stage," he thought, slackening the speed of his horse, so as to note more particularly the ground marks.

"As Stoneman said, they headed down the valley after accomplishing their purpose. They are ahead of me. But that must not deter us from keeping on at our best, brave Charley."

"On, my boy, faster—faster! That little time lost must be regained."

The gallant bay needed little urging, and the next moment he had returned to his former pace, sweeping along at a terrific rate.

The road was now winding nearer the mountains, while the plain grew wider on his left.

After a few miles he reached a small village, clustering under the rim of mountains, apparently at peace with all the world.

It did not seem possible that it could know that such a big world lay beyond its narrow orbit of view.

No doubt attracted by the noise of his rapid oncoming, before he had fairly entered this town its inhabitants began to rush out to see what was coming.

One man, in his excitement, got almost in the way of the young rough rider.

"Seen any horsemen pass this way?"

"Half a dozen, riding like the wind."

"How long ago?"

"An hour. Be you after them?"

Ted had no time to reply to this, for before it was completed he was rods away.

Looking back, he saw the man standing there with uplifted hands, wondering, no doubt, what would come next.

He had not moved when Ted vanished from the scene, the dust kicked up by his steeds leaving a trail behind for a long distance.

Five miles below this village the young rough rider came upon another town, its houses straggled along for two or three miles.

At every dwelling, as he sped past, the occupants would rush out to see if an army had come to sack the place.

Near one of these houses a little dog, with more courage than judgment, rushed into the roadway and set up a boisterous demonstration of his dislike of the newcomer.

Unfortunately for the energetic barker, he got in the way of the flying bay, and a yelp of pain followed, while the dog limped painfully back to his place by the door, a sorrier if not a wiser canine.

Beyond this town the road wound over a spur of the highlands, as if it had been easier to find passage here than over the smooth and level plain.

But all things work to our good, and upon reaching the summit of this crossing Ted discovered a body of horsemen in the distance.

At first he thought they were moving in the same direction as he was, and it quickly flashed into his mind that the riders might be Black Dave's band.

Still, he did not think this possible, though he continued to keep a close watch upon them.

He was certainly moving at a more rapid rate than they, but, entering lower country, in a short time he lost sight of the party.

When he rose on another elevation, he saw them in the distance, and considerably nearer than before.

He was near enough now to distinguish the fluttering robes of a woman among the riders.

The young rough rider instantly concluded she was Clara Blake!

He had just shifted from the back of Charley upon that of the iron-gray, which belonged to Bud Morgan.

This horse, whose name was Captain, was smaller than the bay, but a clean-limbed animal of light step.

Giving the Captain a hint of what he wanted, the iron-gray immediately settled down to work, bearing its young rider on, more swiftly than he had ridden before, toward the party ahead.

Watching these riders closely, Ted soon saw one of them break away from the others.

It was the woman!

Her horse, its flight cut off in either direction of the road, leaped out over the plain at a furious gait.

Three of the men quickly gave pursuit, while three others remained in the road, no doubt expecting their companions would speedily overtake the fugitive.

She shaped her course in a diagonal direction over the plain, so that she was coming back toward the young rough rider. At least, if she did not swerve from her course she would eventually reach the road a little above him.

The three horsemen who did not give pursuit began to move up the road, as if intending to cut off this flight if their companions failed in their purpose.

Seeing that the woman was likely to be overtaken by her enemies, Ted quickly headed his horse toward the

plain, taking a course which would enable him to intercept the fugitive before the three behind could overtake her.

It was a three-cornered race.

Black Bess and Charley followed closely upon the heels of Captain and his young rider.

Thus half a mile had been passed over, when Ted saw the pursuers of the woman suddenly check their horses, to soon come to a standstill.

Then he heard them shouting to her to stop, while they waved their arms frantically.

They seemed to be warning her of some danger, rather than threatening her.

For a moment the young rough rider was puzzled to know what this action meant.

Then the truth flashed upon him.

Ahead of the flying woman a white mist rose against the light of the western sun.

It seemed to start from below the surface of the plain!

Beyond no landscape met his view!

It looked to him as if the land had suddenly come to an end there.

Such, in truth, it had!

The part of the plain over which they were riding formed an upper section of one of those prairie benches, so common in some parts of the West.

Unconscious of her danger, the brave woman, riding for life, was rushing into greater peril by being carried upon the brink of a cut-off, where she was sure to meet death upon the rocks, a hundred feet below!

For a moment, brave Ted Strong felt his senses reel at the realization of her peril.

Her enemies continued to watch her in awe and helplessness.

It was a situation never to be forgotten!

CHAPTER V.

DARING FEATS.

Would the fleeing fugitive see her danger in season to avert her doom?

Her white face was turned backward, as she sought to measure with her eye her possibilities of escape.

If she wondered at the abrupt check in the pursuit of her foes, she felt a feeling of relief and rode on at redoubled speed in order to improve the temporary respite in the chase.

Her horse was sweeping over the plain at such a tremendous pace that the limit had seemed to pass when he could be stopped in season to save her life.

These thoughts flew very rapidly through the mind of the brave young rough rider, while he continued to advance at a swinging gait.

It mattered not to him if the woman was a stranger. She was a human being in deadly danger—such danger, only the most daring and prompt action could turn aside.

He was not at a loss to decide upon his course of rescue.

There was but one way, and that was fraught with great peril to himself, and so hazardous that only the most skillful rider could hope to accomplish it. However, he sped on and on, into the pathway of the fair rider.

He guided the faithful iron-gray, that was putting forth its best efforts in the gallant work, so as to intercept the other horse, just where it would reach the brink of the cut-off.

He could not have reached it earlier if he had wished.

He was approaching her upon the left, the choice of situations, had he been able to choose.

This allowed him his left hand to control the course of his horse, while his right arm was free to carry out his stern purpose.

Alike unconscious of the deadly danger yawning in her pathway and of the tremendous effort being put forth by another to save her, the brave fugitive sped ahead at breathless speed.

Then suddenly she saw the precipice in her path.

With a wild scream of terror upon her lips, she pulled upon the rein of her horse.

The noble animal did try to stop, to turn aside, but it was too late!

The mighty impetus it had gained from its furious bounds carried it on, in spite of its frightened efforts to stop.

Its hoofs scraping upon the earth, tearing up great sods of greensward, while, with a shrill snort and quivering form, it shot over the brink and was quickly lost to sight.

At the same instant this occurred, for the whole adventure was begun and over in a short space of time, the young rough rider dashed alongside of the woman.

The iron-gray was not allowed to check its own headlong pace for a moment.

But, guiding it onward so its sides would barely brush against that of the doomed horse, Ted Strong reached out over that other animal and, his powerful right arm closing about the waist of the fair rider, he lifted her up,

free from her saddle, upon the withers of the gallant Captain.

The shock and the fearful excitement of the scene caused her to fall back in his hold, helpless for the time.

"On, good Captain!" cried the young rough rider, encouragingly, shaping the course of his horse now so as to reach the road, some distance beyond the enemies of the girl whose life he had saved.

The witnesses of this daring and thrilling maneuver seemed to be spellbound for some moments. Then they rallied, and their leader urged them ahead in pursuit.

But Ted had gained too great an advantage by this time, and his fleet-footed steed had borne him back to the highway, well toward Sosoon, before the enemies of his fair charge had entered into an earnest pursuit.

She had recovered before this, and was looking thankfully into his honest countenance, when she exclaimed with a voice of joy:

"Why, Ted Strong! can this be you?"

He turned from looking after her enemies to note carefully for the first time her features.

He expressed his joyful recognition in two words—her name:

"Clara Blake!"

"Yes," she replied. "I did not expect to meet you here, much more under such terrible circumstances. You have saved my life, Mr. Strong."

"We will not speak of that now, Miss Blake. I was glad to have been of assistance to you. Are yonder men, who were in pursuit of you, under a desperado known as Black Dave Ansell?"

"Yes, Ted; and he is my worst enemy. He has sent my poor brother to the death of a criminal, for a crime he never committed, and he would have——"

"Pardon me; Miss Clara, but I know all that. I have seen Guy Stoneman within two hours. When does your brother's sentence expire?"

"Friday, at ten o'clock. Oh, Ted! can nothing be done to save him?"

"I am on my way now to get a reprieve. I hope to reach Sacramento in season to save him."

"Then I must not delay you. Every moment is precious to him, and to me. Fly, Ted Strong, and may you get there in season. I will look after myself."

"You are brave, Miss Blake, but you forget yonder desperadoes."

She turned pale.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

"Keep quiet here a few minutes, and I will see if I cannot introduce myself to them in a way that will cause them to go their path alone."

"But, see!" she cried, with new alarm. "Black Dave has rallied his gang. He will stop you—kill you!"

"Not if I know it, Miss Blake. Here, I will leave you one of my horses. If you need it, ride on to meet my friends as fast as you can. But give me five minutes with them first."

Then the bold young rough rider dashed down the road at the top of Captain's speed, Black Bess keeping close beside him.

The girl watched him with intense interest.

Ted knew he was taking the odds into his hands.

There were six of the outlaws—six to one!

He had always found that a quick, sharp, bold attack would win where one made with hesitation was sure to become a losing venture.

He counted now upon routing Black Dave and his followers before they could concentrate themselves enough to resist him as a body.

He knew, too, that Black Bess was worth any two men in a close struggle, where her iron-shod hoofs could be brought into such deadly action.

He drew his heavy revolvers, preferring them to his rifle, in the hand-to-hand battle he anticipated.

Nor did the young rough rider miscalculate his chances.

Before the three foremost of the outlaws could come to understand that a single-handed foeman was attacking them he was upon them.

Crack! crack! crack! rang out the reports of his firearms, two speaking at once.

Almost simultaneously, the three riders toppled from their saddles and went headforemost to the ground.

With neighs of fright their horses kept on up the road, but they carried no burdens.

Black Dave was one of the remaining three, but even he could not prepare for the onset before the rider of the iron-gray was confronting him.

"Hold up your hands, Dave Ansell, or you are a dead man!" commanded the young rough rider, covering the cowering leader with one revolver, while the other was aimed at his confederates.

Like the majority of desperadoes, he was in reality a coward.

He trembled in front of that deadly weapon, whose hair-trigger needed but the slightest pressure to send its leaden bullet through his brain.

"I surrender!" he faltered. "You have got the drop on me, whoever you are."

The outlaw lifted his hands over his head as he spoke.

"I am the young rough rider of the Southern ranges," declared Ted. "Up with your hands, every man of you, or I will give you the same sort of supper I have given those comrades of yours yonder."

Black Dave's companions quickly obeyed the order.

"Now look carefully that you do not try to play any tricks on me. I am the last person to be trifled with. Do you understand?"

The precious trio bowed their heads together.

"I am glad you look at this matter right."

Then the young rough rider beckoned for Miss Blake to ride down to where he was.

This the brave girl did.

"Take this revolver," said Ted, handing her a weapon, "and shoot the first man who so much as lifts a finger. I am going to put this dark scamp upon one of my horses for a short canter with me."

Then Black Dave Ansell was made to mount Captain, where Ted securely bound him.

Another of the outlaws was lashed to the saddle of the bay.

The third was served in the same manner upon the horse recently ridden by Ansell.

"There; thank you, Miss Blake, for your firmness. You have assisted me materially. I see no fault with the job," viewing with a critical eye the cords that bound the prisoners.

"I should like to know what this means," muttered Ansell. "It is the most infamous act I ever knew. You will have to suffer for it before I am done with you. It was for that reason I did not resist you. Why, we might have overcome you easily."

"No doubt you may think so, and a poor reason is better than no reason, but that does not seem to affect the situation," replied Ted.

"Now, Miss Blake, you can take your choice of the animals of this party and go ahead as I told you. I am sorry I cannot offer you a different saddle, but yours is lost beyond recovery at present.

"Never mind me, Mr. Strong. You are very kind, and my only prayer is that you may reach Sacramento in season to save Arthur."

"I will if that lies in my power. Let me help you mount."

A minute later she was moving slowly up the valley, while Ted prepared to resume his journey.

"Black Dave Ansell, I have a question to ask you. How far is it to the next town?"

"Five miles," replied one of Dave's confederates, before he could stop him.

Smothering an oath under his breath, Dave exclaimed:

"It's much you know about the distance to Chat's Bridge. It's twenty miles if it's a rod."

"Five or twenty, here goes. Come on, boys and girls!" speaking encouragingly to his equine companions.

He had now placed Black Bess in advance, with the bay next, and himself upon the iron-gray in the rear.

He did not intend to let his captives play any sharp scheme on him.

So the young rough rider resumed his long ride under such circumstances as gave him extreme pleasure, though it had cost him a little delay and burdened his horses with extra weight for a time.

CHAPTER VI.

A HAUNTED TOWN.

The young rough rider found the country growing more broken as he rode on with his prisoners.

The road frequently led down steep declivities, while ascents of corresponding sharpness had to be made.

Still, the intelligent Black Bess led the way onward with unflinching speed, uphill and down.

Now and then a lone cabin was passed, where some adventurous fortune seeker had tried to found what he deluded himself into believing was a home.

The swift coming and going of the strange little cavalcade was sure to bring half a dozen curious faces to the little openings that answered for windows. And as the clatter of hoofs grew fainter down the road, the occupants of these huts would rush out into the middle of the highway, to gaze long and earnestly after the departing figures.

No doubt they were the subjects for a "nine days' wonder" to these simple people.

The wonder was many times increased, according to the numbers who witnessed his advent upon the scene, at Chat's Bridge, when the young rough rider rode into that noisy little town.

It consisted of a mere huddle of huts, with one or two buildings boasting of greater pretensions. These were the post office and village tavern.

Ted drew rein in front of the first.

Then, as a crowd quickly gathered about him, he asked for the sheriff.

Presently a tall, lantern-jawed individual, with a red beard and long, black hair, pushed his way forward, saying:

"I reckon, stranger, I can claim that honor, seeing no other man durst take the place for a good two year. I'm Bill Boxer; who air ye?"

"I am Ted Strong, the young rough rider from the Southern ranges."

"Ye don't say," clearing his mouth of a huge cud of tobacco. "I've heerd of ye, Ted Strong. What d'ye want of Bill Boxer?"

"To take these birds into your cage, and keep them there till called for."

Coming nearer, the sheriff bent a piercing gaze upon the captives, exclaiming, after his brief examination:

"Thomas Washin'ton! 'f that galoot aside of ye ain't Black Dave Ansell, I'll eat him raw."

"You will have to look elsewhere for your supper, Sheriff Boxer, for you have hit the nail on the head the first time. Can I trust him in your hands for a day or two?"

"Bet yer bottom dollar on thet. I never let er cuss slip 'tween my fingers yet."

"Good for you, Bill. As I have but little time to waste here, I shall shift them all upon you at once. While you are taking them in hand I will explain how they came into my power."

In a few words the young rough rider then gave an account, as far as he felt it was necessary for him to go into details, of his capture of the noted desperado. He then wrote a hasty order to be given to Ben and Bud should they come that way, advising them to take Ansell along with them.

"Better stay with us till yer friends come erlong," said the officer.

Ted shook his head to this invitation.

He had three hours of hard riding before him ere he wished to stop for the night.

Ted hoped to reach Painter's Lick before nightfall, and, with that thought in his mind, he swept on mile after mile.

There is an inspiration in such a ride as that undertaken by the young rough rider. There was an exhilaration in the mountain air as he was carried on by his faithful steeds, which had entered into the spirit of the wild race with almost human interest.

Now he rode the blood-bay, that sped with light feet over the broken way, as if proud of the work it was doing. Then he bestrode again the iron-gray Captain, as sure of foot and as fleet as when he bore his young master down to the very brink of the cut-off and saved, as if by a miracle, the life of beautiful Clara Blake. And now he was once more in the saddle of bonnie Black Bess, whose untiring feet bore him on and on into the strange country banded together with five hundred links, each a mile long.

The sun sank behind a mass of mountains in the west, and long shadows fell across his pathway. These mingled and became the deeper gloom of night.

He passed through three small towns, as a meteor might sweep on its way through space, and once again he was threading a wide territory of forest, bidding defiance to the woodsman's ax.

Once the baleful eyes of a panther glowered out from the thicket upon this human invader of its domains.

Then a huge cinnamon bear, moving clumsily across the narrow pathway, failed to escape the iron heel of Bess, which brought from the big brute an angry growl; but before it could lift a paw in its defense the horseman and his three steeds had vanished from the scene, as fled the hosts of yesterday.

The six hours were now spun out, and the young rough rider was beginning to look with increasing interest for that isolated mountain hamlet, bearing the rather dismal name of Painter's Lick.

"It must be in this vicinity," he thought, "yet I can see no light in the distance, though I seem to be out of the forest."

He had indeed passed the lower limit of the woods, and the valley widened here to what appeared in the darkness to be a fertile tract of bottom land.

In the midst of his speculations, when he was beginning to think he should have to look around for a camping place for the night, not caring to ride his horses much further, he found that he was passing one house after another, though there was no sign of life about them.

Not a light glimmered at one of the windows, and not a sound fell upon his ears.

"Can this be Painter's Lick?" he thought. "It looks like a deserted town."

Near what he judged to be the center of the settlement, without an inhabitant now, he came in front of a larger house than he had seen—a two-story structure, weather-beaten and lonesome in its appearance.

The adjoining sheds and buildings attached to this main house, if nothing else, showed to the young rough rider that it had been formerly a tavern for the accommodation of man and beast. Had it been light enough for him to have read it, a storm-stained sign resting against the sill of the building would have told him that it was the Painter's Lick Home.

"I can do no better than to stop here for the night," said Ted to himself. "Perhaps by looking around a bit I can find something for the horses. I wonder what has happened to this place? Looks as if everybody had taken French leave."

Dismounting, he prepared to carry out his intentions, but he had barely removed the saddle from Black Bess before a drawling, nasal voice called out from the hedge, a little to one side:

"Who in durnation be ye?"

It may not be admitting too much to say that Ted was slightly surprised at this abrupt and most-unexpected inquiry, though he never allowed himself to be caught at any serious disadvantage.

Prepared now for any attack that might be made, he replied with caution:

"A friendly traveler, who feels disposed to stop here to-night."

"Crotched hemlock! stop in Painter's Lick all night! Ye can't, stranger."

"Who is there to object? You are the first person I have seen in town."

"I'm th' only one hyur, mister," was the sorrowful reply.

"And who are you?"

"I'm Shanty Sam, too shiftless to git erway or I'd be a goner, too. Reckon th' ghosts don't want enny sich poor truck, either."

"Come out here and let me look at you, Shanty Sam," commanded the young rough rider.

"Won't shoot me, stranger?"

"Not if you act on the square, Shanty Sam. Come out of your corner."

The sound of some one moving slowly and with shambling steps came from the bushes, and then as uncouth a specimen of manhood as he had ever seen appeared on the scene, leaning heavily on a crooked, oaken stick that reached two or three feet above his head. His whole body shook as he faced the newcomer.

"Who be you?" he asked, his voice sinking to a whisper before he had completed the short sentence.

Ted told him his name, and his object in stopping, following with the inquiry:

"What has become of the people who built these houses?"

"Gone away," was the mournful reply.

"Where?"

"Dunno."

"Why did they leave here?"

"Couldn't stand it enny longer."

"Stand what?"

"The ghosts and spirits an' sich creeturs thet hang round hyur."

"Explain yourself more fully, Shanty Sam."

"This is a ha'nted town, mister."

"Haunted! Shanty Sam, what do you mean?"

"Jess wot I speak, mister," was the sorrowful reply. "I tell ye I feel 's bad 's ye do."

"What haunts it?"

"Spooks, an' sounds, an' critters sich 's no mortal ever put peeper on an' lived to tell on't."

"Have you seen any of them, Shanty Sam?"

"I has, mister."

"But you seem to be considerably alive."

"Too shiftless to die, mister. An' I'se th' man who diskivered this town afore it was one an' gin it a name."

Here the tall, stooping figure suddenly lifted, until Shanty Sam stood for a moment with something of his former importance of manner appearing in his fallen greatness.

"Try and make your meaning more clear, Sam. I may be a little thick-headed, but I must confess I cannot understand all you are saying, or trying to say."

"Wull, ye see, mister, I wus th' fust creetur with only two feet to poke up this ere way, an' gettin' tired arter a long day's tramp, I laid down to snooze an' rest a bit. I wus right in th' hollerday o' th' sweetest dream ever cum to mortal, thinkin' I wus to hum with th' ol' folks eatin' rye cakes an' honey, when, may I be durned blowed, 'f sumthin' wet an' rough didn't begin to lick my han'."

Here Shanty Sam held up his right hand as if to prove that it had been treated as he claimed, but the thick coating of grease and grime covering him caused him to exclaim:

"Can't prove it, mister, but it's true mount'in high. It wus a monstrous big painter, wot had crept to me an' wus washin' my hand, mebbe to fin' out 'f I wus white.

"I had sense 'nough —oh, I weren't born a fool—to lay

parfectly still an' let th' durned critter slobber over my hand till I could hev sworn th' next mornin' 'tweren't a mate to my t'other.

"When the critter had got sort o' tired o' doin' thet, I s'pose, an' thinkin', mebbe, he'd too big a contract to fix th' other likewise, he stole erway an' left me."

"When I cum to tell on't th' folks said I wus yarnin' it, but th' story didn't all git the cuff, fer this place has been known ever sence as 'Painter's Lick.' An' thet's how it cum to be called so."

"Now, Sam," said Ted, with an amused expression upon his countenance, "if you make it as clear to me, if no more truthful, how this town has become deserted, I shall be much obliged to you."

"I guess ye will be, too.

"I don't exactly want to be too person'l, but 'pears to me ye air a leetle thick-headed, or ye'd know afore this frum whut I've said. But hyur goes fer anuther shoot.

"Ye see, 'bout six months ergo, there begun to begin sum o' th' tarnalest sounds eround this place ye ever sot eyes—I mean ears on! It took—I mean they took on th' bootiful things o' moosic. Now, I'm naterally terrible fond o' moosic, but this wus so tarnal nightest I didn't keer to hear it 'tall.

"It wus onnateral. Sum one said the moosicans were spooks tunin' their harps, an' it begun to look so. One'd be 'way up in th' top of thet big pine, a-singin' erway like all possessed. 'Nuther would be in th' bushes all-fired busy with his singin'. One'd be behind sum big rock; anuther'd be skulkin' down by th' brook, an' so wus they scattered like misketters in a Jersey swamp.

"One'd strike up 'Yankee Doodle,' 'nuther 'Th' Gal I Left Behind Me,' sum other feller 'Annie Rooney,' an' so on through the catercorner o' moosic. Nuthin' like it ever wus known sence th' cats held government in Egypty.

"To round up th' concert, jess at midnight's solemn hour every durned player, no matter whut he'd been givin' out, would begin th' 'Dead Man's March.'

"Then, comin' frum no one could tell where, th' train o' ghosts would come marchin' down th' street, the big feller ahead thumpin' er snare drum for all he wus worth an' 'nuther chap throed in to boot.

"An' this cum every blessed night, rain or shine.

"'Sides this, there were too many blamed funny things er happenin' all th' time, thet th' folks got so worn out they naterally decided that they didn't keer to live with spooks enny longer.

"So they packed up their duds an' slid out o' town, leavin' me hyur all erlone."

CHAPTER VII.

A SKIRMISH WITH SPOOKS.

"Why didn't you go with the rest, Sam?" asked the young rough rider, when the other had concluded his strange story.

"Too much work to pick up my leetle truck, mister. Say, be you goin' to stay hyur to-night?"

"That was my plan."

"I wouldn't advise you to do it, mister."

"Why?"

"Ye'll see sich sights and hear sich things 's drive ye mad."

"That doesn't trouble me so much as the matter of finding feed for my horses does. I have ridden seventy-five miles since noon, and the animals must have good provender. Do you think there is anything in the shape of grain lying round here I could get?"

"Nope."

"Haven't you got any? You must have something to live on."

"Live on air and brook water. Lots o' thet round here, mister."

Ted Strong, who felt that he had dallied with this singular individual as long as he could afford, now raised one of his revolvers, which instantly brought a change over the manner of the other.

"Don't shoot, mister. Mebbe I've got a leetle corn at my shanty. But Lord sakes! there can't be 'nough to feed three big hosses, and hev 'nough left to take me through the winter. I'm a great feeder myself, mister."

"I'll pay you well, Sam. I will give you ten dollars for two baitings."

"Make it ten apiece an' I'll do it, if I starve myself. Got enny terbacker?"

"Not a bit, Sam. I do not use it myself."

"Nor me n'ither," said Shanty Sam with a low chuckle, adding to himself, "cos I ain't got it."

"Now, Sam, lend a hand and help me care for my horses, and I'll throw in an extra five for my own lodging."

"Thet makes it sound business-like. Shanty Sam ain't no stingy galoot, an' he'll treat ye white's foam an' stick to ye like pitch."

The young rough rider had already turned his attention to caring for his horses, which were quietly cropping the sweet grass growing in the street of the deserted town of Painter's Lick.

Inside of an hour the animals had been well groomed, and given a generous feeding of grain.

Then Ted followed his host to his humble shanty, standing close by the tavern.

As he had expected, he found here only the most simple means of a living.

Shanty Sam started a fire upon the flat rock laid for a hearthstone, and a dish of water was soon simmering over the heat.

"A leetle tea is food and drink," commented the host, as he laid a few more twigs on the blaze. "A few sticks laid right air jess's good a tarnal heap. It takes back work to brung menny sticks."

Sam then brought forward a small remnant of venison and a dish of corn.

The last he set Ted to pounding up in an old mortar with a pestle that looked as if it had seen service among the Indians.

When this corn was crushed into meal, Sam poured some water over it, mixed it together and put the "bread" over some coals to bake.

So supper was prepared, and the two ate heartily of the plain food, the while Shanty Sam related strange experience after experience that he had witnessed in the haunted town.

"Shore's ye air born an' hyur eatin' like a king with me," he declared, with emphasis, "they'll cum ter-night. Then, mebbe ye'll think I ain't a Goliath fer lyin'."

"Call me if they do," said Ted, good-naturedly, as he lay down to rest.

"Oh! they'll do thet; but I'll be on hand to keep yer company. 'F ye don't say it's better'n enny circus, I'll run er race with ye to Cape Horn."

Not feeling that this called for any reply, the young rough rider turned his face away from the speaker, and a moment later he was sound asleep.

Ted had not slept long, for it had been well on toward midnight when he had lain down, before he was aroused by the voice of Shanty Sam, crying, smartly:

"Great Cape Horn! they're comin'. Hark! hear thet moosic? Ever see—I mean hear th' like sence Gabriel tooted his trumpet?"

The young rough rider arose to his feet. As he did so the strains of some song came faintly to his ears.

In fact, there seemed to be a medley of songs, a dozen being sung at the same time!

These came from as many directions, some soft and musical; others pitched in a high key and possessing more volume than melody.

"Did ye ever hear th' beat?" asked the trembling Sam, as the two stepped outside his shanty to get a clearer sound of the midnight revelry.

"There's one spook a-singin' way up in thet big pine, an' there's 'nuther down by the ledge. One's under 'em bushes, an' there seems to be a hull row on 'em behind 'em empty huts. Lord to Peters! There's one jess struck in right by Painter's Lick Home."

Ted realized that as far as he had spoken Sam was correct. The singers seemed to be sending forth their songs from every quarter.

But no two were singing the same song.

The one down by the edge of the growth fringing the corner of open country was doling forth "Nellie Gray," while another in the distance was sending up the strains of "Dixie."

In the midst of this festival there broke upon the ears of the listeners a deeper, more startling voice, echoing from the walls of the old, deserted inn, crying with intense pathos:

"We meet 'neath the sounding rafter,
And the walls around us are bare;
As they shout to our peals of laughter,
It seems that the dead are there.
But stand to your glasses steady!
We drink to our comrades' eyes;
A cup to our dead already,
And, hurrah for the next that dies!"

Shanty Sam was trembling from head to foot, and be-

fore the last stanza was finished he was groaning in his anguish.

"Great, horned prophet! Reckon ye don't think I gal vinated now, Mister Strong."

"It is the wildest concert I ever listened to," acknowl edged Ted.

"Th' most onnateral, ye mean. It can't be beat this side o' Tophet. D'ye wonder th' folks jess slid out'n town by mornin' light?"

"There must be some explanation to it."

"'Splanation? Ain't I been 'splainin' ever sence ye sot huf in Painter's Lick?"

Ted made no reply to this, knowing it would be useless.

But, as he continued to listen, the wild melody of voices grew wilder, if that was possible.

Then, suddenly, Shanty Sam grasped him by the arm, and, pointing up the lonely street, dimly lighted by the stars and the struggling beams of the moon, that seemed to have got lodged in the clouds.

"They air comin'—th' speerit band!" exclaimed Sam. "I can hear their footsteps like bufflers knockin' 'long a stony path."

The young rough rider had heard the sounds of march ing men, as Sam had said, breaking upon the night scene with the rattling noise of feet shod with iron.

Then, as he waited and listened, he discovered a train of white-robed figures coming slowly along the street, the one at the head beating a snare drum.

At that moment the unseen singers began to sing in unison the "Dead Man's March."

So regularly was this change made from the mixed melody of a minute before that it seemed as if the musicians must have had some signal to unite in their efforts.

Slowly the uncanny train came down the darkened street, looking weird and ghostly in the semidarkness.

"Ain't it all jess 'as I tol' yer?" stuttered Sam.

Ted made no reply.

The heads of all of the marching men were surmounted by high, peaked caps, as spotless as their raiment, which reached to their feet and trailed upon the ground as they moved solemnly ahead.

"I've a mind to try their mettle," he said, in a low tone to his companion.

"Bullit wus never made to fetch blood on 'em, 'cos speerits don't hev enny spare blood."

"Watch and see what a shot will do," replied the young rough rider.

"Don't do it!" gasped Shanty Sam. "It'll make 'em madder'n hornets, an' I opine a mad speerit is wuss nor a hull swarm o' hornets."

Unheeding this remonstrance, Ted took aim with one of his revolvers at the foremost of these marching figures, so that the bullet should pierce the conelike cap close to the head of the wearer, but not to harm him.

The effect was magical. It was startling.

A yell that would have done credit to a Pawnee brave rang from the lips of the ghostly drummer, and he fled at the top of his speed toward the lower end of the town.

Ted followed his opening shot with three or four others, all fired with the intention to frighten and not to kill.

The consequence was that inside of a minute a dozen white-clad figures were rushing madly away, without any regard to the time they kept to the song of the "March of the Dead," which was not yet completed.

"That shows the nature of your 'spooks,'" declared the young rough rider, with a low laugh.

Shanty Sam shook from head to foot again, but this time it was with outbursts of laughter.

"Boomin' beetles!" he roared, "thet beats all natur'. I'm a licked painter 'f I ain't dumwizzled."

"I'm going now to look after the singers," said Ted, starting toward the old tavern.

"Don't go thar!" cried Sam, catching him by the arm.

But the young rough rider was not to be deterred from his purpose, and followed closely by the trembling miner, he entered the unfastened door of the deserted building.

Guided by the sounds of the unseen singer, he crossed first one creaking floor and then another, until he found himself in a rear chamber, where he knew the singer must be.

There was no person in the room.

The moon, riding out from behind a cloud, sent its

mellow light upon the rough floor, penetrating into two of the four corners, so as to make them nearly as plainly seen as by daylight.

The singing came from one of these.

Placed there near the open window was a graphophone!

The mystery was solved!

"We need not look further," said Ted. "It was instruments like this which did the singing, and the men in their sheets did the rest."

For once the loquacious Sam was silent.

"If you have any doubt about it, come with me," said Ted, simply.

Then he led the way down to where another of the musical instruments was just starting in upon a new song.

Shanty Sam looked down upon this and then upon his companion, managing to ejaculate at last:

"Jeems Hover! An' 'em air th' spooks o' Painter's Lick?"

"Exactly, Sam. Now, with your permission, I am going back to finish my sleep. I have one hundred and fifty miles to ride to-morrow."

"Won't 'em spooks—I mean galoots in their night clothes cum back, mebbe?"

"I will let you watch for them, Sam. I'm sleepy."

So the young rough rider went back to his rude couch, and five minutes later was sleeping as soundly as if danger was unknown, and despite the fact that four hundred miles of hard riding lay before him, to be accomplished in a little more than two days.

Shanty Sam did begin to watch, but in less than half an hour his gray head drooped, and from the loud outbursts that came from his nasal organ, it was quite certain he was keeping his lookout in dreams.

Ted Strong was astir by the break of day, and looking to the welfare of his horses.

These he found, to his delight, showed no signs of their hard driving of the previous day.

Feeding them generously of Sam's corn, and a foddering of dried grass, he prepared himself a breakfast of meat and corn bread, washed down with the cool spring water.

The young rough rider was putting the saddle on the back of the bay, when Shanty Sam awoke to find that his visitor was leaving him.

"Why didn't ye shake me out?" he asked. "Wus ye goin' off without sayin' good-by to th' ol' man. Mebbe I'll go with ye 's fur 's Rock Bottom. I'm feelin poorty anxious to tell 'em down there whut kind o' spooks ha'nt Painter's Lick."

"I am afraid you cannot keep up with me. And where's your horse?" asked Ted, half expecting he would call for one of his.

But in that respect he was happily disappointed.

Disappearing up the valley, Sam was gone but a few minutes, so that Ted had not yet mounted his horse, when he returned, leading by a dilapidated bridle a bony, time-beaten Nez Perce pony.

"Pick up yer feet, there, Abdallah!" he commanded, as the poor animal blundered and nearly fell upon its knees. "Ain't ye got enny style erbout ye?"

Then, bringing an old, weather-beaten saddle from the hut, he was pounding it down upon the scrawny back of his steed, as the young rough rider vaulted into his seat.

"Ain't ye goin' to stop fer yer friend?" grumbled Sam.

"I am sorry to part with you, Sam, but you cannot expect to keep along with one who must ride at the rate of more than twelve miles an hour. I wish you luck on your ride, and hope, when I come back this way, I shall find these houses overflowing with people, and busy times at Painter's Lick."

Grumbling to himself over the ungratefulness of men in general, and Ted in particular, Sam led his pony alongside a big bowlder, and lumbered into the saddle.

But the rotten girth broke, sending him headfirst into the middle of the road.

"Wish you better luck next time," called back the young rough rider, as he sped down the road, waving his hand to the discomfited man.

A minute later, while Shanty Sam was scrambling to his feet, the deserted town and its single inhabitant was lost to the view of Ted forever.

Later on, he was to learn that the original people of the

town, who had been frightened away in the manner described by Sam, upon learning the hoax that had been played upon them, all came back.

But Painter's Lick had no further interest for Ted Strong at this time.

His face was resolutely set forward toward Sacramento.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUNDRED MILES OF DESERT.

The young rough rider, who had questioned Shanty Sam in regard to the best course for him to follow, knew he was now approaching Lone Ranch Range, which he hoped to reach by noon, where he would find resting place for himself and horses.

Then he would have fifty miles to reach Buncher's Bench, where Stoneman had charged him to keep to the right.

With good courage, happy in the thought that he had saved Clara Blake from her enemies and captured Black Dave Ansell, who he knew would be an important factor in clearing Arthur Blake, he kept on at a rattling good pace.

Three times he shifted from the back of each horse into the saddle of another.

The noble creatures were holding up finely, while they measured, with their iron heels, mile after mile of the long journey.

The forenoon passed without adventure.

In truth, Ted did not see a human being from the moment he lost sight of Shanty Sam until he drew near to the solitary cabin standing on the dividing ridge, between the upper valley and Buncher's Bench.

It lacked a little of noon then—an hour or more.

His arrival caused no little commotion, and it was evident few travelers stopped there.

He found plenty of feed for his horses, which were still carrying themselves exceedingly well, and one-third of the distance was now traversed.

After three hours of rest at Lone Ranch, the young rough rider again seated himself in the saddle, and resumed his journey, with the hearty godspeed of the people there.

All that afternoon he rode in the eye of the western sun and within sight and sound of a murmuring stream, whose constant song seemed to afford a tune for his horse's feet as they flew along the way.

This was the easiest section of his long trip.

The rapidity with which these fifty miles were measured by his advance gave him new-found courage, and he was looking hopefully forward to his stopping place for the night, when half of his ride would be over.

But before sunset he began to notice a haze on the western sky, which he felt foreboded a storm.

This grew darker and darker, until the sun was obscured by it.

It had a peculiar, yellowish hue, which puzzled him.

"I am afraid it is going to be a tornado," he thought; "a regular norther, as they would call it down in Texas; a cyclone on the Kansas plain."

Black Bess was already sniffing the air.

She showed signs of fear, which was quickly shared by her mates.

"I wonder what is up, now?" he thought.

In a moment it was plain to him.

It was a fire!

He knew from the extent and denseness of the smoke that it must be a conflagration reaching for many miles.

What if it crossed his path?

For the first time since he had left Sosoon the young rough rider felt something like fear.

"If it crosses my path I shall not get there!" he exclaimed aloud.

This dread continued to increase as he advanced.

The conflagration seemed to cover a vast extent of territory toward the north and west.

It was miles and miles broad, licking up everything in its pathway!

Great clouds of black smoke were wafted overhead, making the closing day as dark as night.

Ted had no alternative!

He must keep on at all hazards.

Hoping against fate, he watched, with strained vision,

the front of this great avalanche of flames, while Black Bess bore him as he had never ridden before.

His sole hope lay in passing the line of this conflagration before it came down upon his path.

But fifteen minutes later he realized that there was no possible chance for him to reach the Carson Trail, spoken of by Stoneman.

This left him a fearful course, as he knew only too well.

It meant that his only way of keeping on was by the Death Plain, one hundred miles in width—a hundred miles where there was neither water nor grass for his horses!

Brave Ted Strong trembled at the thought of meeting this.

"It is life against life," he murmured.

Fortunately, the conflagration had not yet come near enough to the old wagon trail he was following to give him any real danger for an hour or more.

Still it was sweeping down toward him with the speed of a race horse, and he knew if he had been but a little later he must have been swallowed up in its fiery folds.

Something like five miles was passed in fifteen minutes, when the young rough rider began to realize that he was approaching the dread plain, which had been the grave of so many travelers trying to cross its sterile waste.

"I shall have to ride all night," he thought. "The horses can never do it, in addition to their afternoon's work. I must give them a rest, even if they get no food."

He was more fortunate than he had expected.

Half a mile further on he came upon a fertile spot where considerable grass was growing around a spring of water.

Though now in the very pathway of the oncoming flames, he did not hesitate to stop.

"I will stay here just as long as it is possible, then I will mount and begin the passage of the desert."

So he leaped lightly to the ground and turned his animals loose to feed and slake their thirst at the spring, being careful to see that they did not drink to their injury.

The young rough rider, with such gloomy prospects ahead, then prepared to rest himself, though he had only a little dried meat to eat.

This would be sufficient for him.

Thus an hour wore away, and all the time the fire was coming nearer.

It is true the main body was passing to the north, but the great, black wing swooping down in that direction was enough to destroy everything it could cover.

"Come, Bess, Charley and Captain, we must be up and away."

The obedient animals, at the sound of his voice, immediately stopped their feeding and came to his side.

Three minutes later he was once more in the saddle.

Night had now fairly set in, but it was lighted far and wide with a white heat, capped with black clouds of smoke hanging like palls of impenetrable gloom.

Never sure he was pursuing the most direct course, the young rough rider now entered upon that stage of his long ride which he will never forget.

The plain before him was not vast in extent in the full meaning of that expression, still he knew, turn whither he would, but backward—and that would be to run a gantlet of fire—he must ride nearly a hundred miles—a hundred miles bare of vegetation and arid of water.

For the first hour he found pebbles and bowlders strewn along his path, while he always seemed to be nearing a range of black and purple mountains.

Patches of bunch grass for a few miles dotted the forbidden landscape, when even these disappeared.

Then a gateway opened in the mountains like the jaws of some huge leviathan, and he found himself among dunes and large hills of clean, white sand.

There was every appearance of water, but not a drop of that precious liquid to be found.

There was an aridness to the atmosphere which parched his lips, and made his throat dry and husky.

The moon had now risen, but as it climbed the pathless hill of the eastern sky, it looked down upon the solitary rider and his weary bearers with a sickly light.

To add to the impressiveness of this lonely course, there

were scattered along the route the skeletons of men and horses, ill-fated travelers who had fallen by the way upon this terrible road.

The young rough rider recalled, with a vivid memory, some of the weird stories which had reached him of this Death Plain. Among them was the thrilling tale of the old trapper, known as Bill Williams, a guide for Fremont upon one of his expeditions, and almost as noted as Kit Carson.

Bill, accompanied by half a dozen companions, was crossing this barren belt of country, upon his return from a foray into the region of upper California. As the result of the expedition he was taking along with him over a thousand mules and horses, and was assisted in looking after the animals by some Californians, whom he had impressed into his service.

These, already tired of their part in the bold raid, upon reaching this desolate country, refused to go further. Bill stormed furiously, but in vain, and nightfall found him entering this desert with only four men to assist him.

The mules must have scented danger and hardships, for they behaved so badly that their drivers could not manage them. To add to the peril of their situation, the Californians, their numbers increased by others, gave pursuit, resolved to rescue the stolen animals.

There were nearly two hundred of the pursuers, and old Bill grew desperate. He ordered his men to push on with greater speed, but the haste only precipitated the crisis. The horses, owing to the fatigue and overdriving, began to fall by the way, and before the end of that terrible race was made every horse and mule had perished, save the rugged animal ridden by Bill Williams himself, and of the men, he alone reached the other side.

Many of the bones of these poor animals still lie bleaching in the sun, and with them many others, for the eccentric, old trapper was not the only one to get caught upon Death Plain.

As the moon crept higher, it cast weird shadows over the scene, some of which looked like the ghostly train of a body of phantoms, keeping eternal watch over the dreary scene.

In spite of his strong self-control, the young rough rider grew despondent, and his jaded horses became more and more listless.

Ted had been six hours upon this stage of the journey, and he judged he had ridden sixty miles, when he made a brief halt.

Then he pushed on for another hour, trying to cheer up his failing horses with kind words.

He was riding Charley now, Black Bess going in advance, while the Captain followed in their tracks.

He had long since lost sight of the conflagration, which could not follow him here.

While trying to peer into the glimmering space ahead, he was nearly unseated by a stumble on the part of the bay, which instantly came to a stop.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOST BRIDGE.

Realizing what this abrupt stop of the bay meant, yet loath to acknowledge it to himself, the young rough rider touched the faltering horse smartly, and spoke an encouraging word to it.

The noble animal rallied for a moment, took two or three steps forward, and then reeled, as if it was going to fall.

Ted was quickly upon his feet.

He was not likely to receive any further benefit from Charley.

The horse was dead lame!

"Poor fellow!" said Ted, softly, running his hand down the foreleg, swollen and feverish, "he has strained the cords. Alas! Charley, old fellow, you are out of the race."

Seeming to understand his helplessness, the suffering creature put its panting nostrils close to Ted's face.

"I hate to leave you here, Charley, and I hate to shoot you down, as I would a dog. I must go on, though."

Then he added, while his countenance lightened:

"Perhaps you will be able to follow us to the nearest settlement, where you can be cared for."

"Come, Bess, you will have to take your turn now."

With this brief delay, the young rough rider resumed his journey and a moment later was moving swiftly and silently over the white sand, which muffled the hoofstrokes of the horses and made his flight seem more unnatural than it would otherwise have been.

The captain, who was bearing up nobly under the strain, followed dutifully in the steps of Black Bess.

Behind these, the gap rapidly widening, with a painful limp, came the gallant bay.

"Poor fellow!" cried Ted, "come on, if you can, to the next station. I will speak for extra rations for you. Good-by."

The horse whinnied shrilly, showing manifest sorrow at this separation.

Five minutes later he was not to be seen, and with an added burden at his heart, the brave, young rough rider rode on.

He changed horses, during this stage, every thirty minutes, and he was constantly dreading lest the animals should break down entirely.

With what feelings of gladness he saw the new day breaking in the east may be imagined. But with this joy came a weight of sadness.

The third day was fast coming, and only a little more than twenty-four hours hence the fate of Arthur Blake would be sealed.

Was there no end to this dreary plain of solitude and desolation?

Only one who has been in such a situation can understand it. No language can describe it.

While the morning light grew brighter in the east, to his unbounded joy, Ted Strong saw a gradual change coming over the landscape.

His horses saw it, and increased their pace without urging.

Black Bess, now carrying him, showed her delight with short neighs.

"Hurrah!" cried the young rough rider, in the exuberance of his new-found hope, "at last! at last!"

So the great plain of death was passed at last. Its horrors were a memory, but such a memory.

"I should feel better if Charley were only here," thought Ted. "I wonder, too, what the boys will do when they reach the edge of this hundred-mile desert?"

How refreshing the country looked after the dreary scene just left behind!

In less than half an hour, the sight of man and beast was further gladdened by the view of a settlement to be seen in the near distance.

This proved to be the little frontier village of Hard Luck, whose appearance was sure to bear out the aptness of the name.

Despite this fact, the young rough rider hailed its collection of cabins with unfeigned pleasure, and the cordial greeting of the people was appreciated to its fullest extent.

As near as he could tell, Ted had ridden, since the previous morning, over two hundred miles—two hundred and twenty-five, he believed, and so it afterward proved.

The time was really a little more than a full day, but less than thirty hours.

What made the feat more surprising was that it had been done with an almost continual move, he having stopped for rest barely four hours.

Little wonder if the horses looked jaded and tired out.

They must have possessed uncommon strength and powers of endurance, as well as speed, to have accomplished the feat.

As he was now, according to the best information he could get, only one hundred and fifty miles from Benson, Ted resolved to rest here at Hard Luck until nearly noon.

It goes without saying that he spared no means in his care of the horses, though he fed them most sparingly at first.

Knowing somewhat the hardship he must have passed through, the inhabitants lent willing hands to do all they could for him and his animals.

So the forenoon passed.

Before noon, finding that both Bess and the Captain had rallied so that he felt it prudent to resume his journey, Ted placed the saddles upon them.

Then, having paid his helpers well for what they had

done for him, and also for caring for Charley should he reach there, as he believed the horse would, the young rough rider sprang into his seat.

Black Bess moved on with her old-time lightness of foot, and Ted waved back his farewell to Hard Luck with a light heart.

It would not be interesting to follow too closely the flight for this long afternoon through a country that was broken into many defiles and rough valleys.

The road at times wound over sharp hillsides and anon down corresponding declivities.

Frequently the way was strewn with loose stones that were a constant source of annoyance to the horses.

But they managed to save themselves from harm, and their young rider felt his spirits rise as he saw ahead a smoother country.

The course he was following seemed to dip into the upper end of a long, narrow valley, and he anticipated he was entering an easier stage of his journey.

He occasionally passed small villages, and one town of considerable importance.

He stopped here for half an hour to allow his horses a breathing spell, and to give them an extra feeding of grain.

They missed the assistance of the bay.

Soon after leaving this place he overtook a man afoot who hailed him for a ride upon his spare horse.

Had this request come at any other spot, he might have ignored the demand entirely. As it was, he felt obliged to speak to the stranger, from the fact that he had come unexpectedly upon a fork in the road, where the highway split into two such even parts that he was unable to decide which one to follow.

"I am bound to Benson, sir. Will you kindly tell me which road to take?"

"If you take either, mister, you'll be sorry for it."

"But which is the more direct way?"

"Neither ain't direct, mister, as I reckon it. Gin me a ride?"

"Where does this right-hand road lead to?"

"Leads to houses, mister. Gin me a boost on thet spare hoss of yours."

"Not unless you answer my questions civilly. I have a long ride ahead of me, and I need all the strength my spare horse has to help out the other."

"I ain't more'n a skeeter on a hoss' back," and the impudent speaker made a feint to mount the iron-gray.

"I am sorry, but I can't afford to accommodate you to-day. Have you far to go?"

"I want to go to Benson, mister. We'll be comp'ny."

"But I must get there before nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"That'd suit me to a T. Here goes, mister."

"Let that horse alone, sir. If I thought it was essential for you to ride, I would try and accommodate you. Under the circumstances I cannot. You have declined to answer my questions; good-day."

Before the amazed man could offer further resistance, Ted had started ahead, taking the right-hand road.

Then the stranger shouted after him:

"Ye can't get through to Benson that way, mister. The Wildcat Bridge is gone!"

"Can I go the other way any better?"

"No; it goes on the other side of the mountain. That's your only way."

Without longer delay, the young rough rider sped down the mountain road.

For an hour he pursued the even tenor of his ride, when suddenly he swung around a sharp curve in the road, where it overhung a noisy river.

He could look down the valley for half a mile.

But less than that distance ahead he saw where the road swung around sharply to the right, and crossed over to the other side of the stream.

This was Wildcat River.

Yonder he believed must be the bridge, which the stranger had said was gone.

He was riding Black Bess now, with the iron-gray still behind.

It is safe to say his gaze did not leave the turn in the road where it crossed the river until he was near enough to see the startling truth.

The bridge was gone!

CHAPTER X.

TED REACHES BENSON AT LAST.

Bonnie Black Bess was sweeping on at her usual rate of speed.

In a moment he would be down to the site of the lost bridge.

The young rough rider glanced over the scene, to note if there was any other way for him to cross the mountain stream.

There was no possible way or place for him to ford the stream.

It ran between rock walls of nearly fifty feet in height, while its bed was covered with huge bowlders.

Its course marked an ugly rent in the rugged passway.

At last his journey had come to an end.

Here was a barrier, greater and more fearful to contemplate than even the horrors of the Death Plain.

He was deciding that he must check the onward rush of Black Bess before she should be carried with the force of her swift advance over the chasm yawning across the way.

A wild thought—rising to hope—flashed through his mind.

Might he not, trusting to Bonnie Bess, leap the chasm, and thus be able to pursue his way?

He knew it was a hazardous feat.

He had made many of them in his life.

To stop short of it meant defeat, after all his efforts so far.

Given but a moment in which to decide, he determined to risk all upon the hazard!

"Bonnie Bess, now for the trial of your brave life!"

The next instant the brave mare came down to the edge of the chasm and quivered for a moment upon its brink.

"On, Bess!" said her rider, boldly.

The noble steed obeyed without flinching.

Then, without slackening her speed, the young rough rider urged his faithful steed along the narrow path, and, when Black Bess was speeding like an arrow through the air, a dozen armed men sprang into his pathway, commanding him to stop!

Never was there a more precarious situation.

Never was a danger more bravely met.

Knowing that a moment's hesitation then meant death to him and his steed, Ted Strong spoke clearly to his horse to keep on.

He snatched his Colt revolver from his belt in readiness for instant use.

But Black Bess did not seem to touch the ground, and the cloud of sparks flying out from her heels told she had struck solid rock once more.

Apparently awestricken by this daring feat, the gang of waylayers skulking by the narrow roadside did not lift a weapon before the young rough rider was in their midst.

Then there was hot skurrying, and a mad rush for safety.

Ted fired several shots after them, but more to frighten them off than with any intentions of hitting them.

Finding he had little more to fear from the terrified outlaws, whose appearance at that place and time was ever a mystery to him, he turned to look back after the iron-gray.

Captain had followed its mate to the very brink of the chasm, but there he had stopped.

He was now lifting his head high in the air, while he gazed wistfully over the abyss he had not the courage to try and cross.

"Come over, Captain!" called Ted, encouragingly. "You can do it."

The iron-gray whinnied in reply, but he approached the edge of the chasm with evident trepidation.

Its master called to it again, when the faithful horse crouched for a jump across the terrible abyss!

The desperadoes in the edge of the forest had rallied to renew their attack of the single rider.

But the sight of the horse getting ready to spring across that awful depth held their attention.

There was human skill and calculation in the way Captain placed each foot, as he prepared for the terrible ordeal.

The young rough rider scarcely dared to breathe, while he continued to watch the progress of the iron-gray, and

when, at last, the animal had gained sure footing, he gave expression to a low exclamation of joy.

"Come on, old boy! You did that nobly!"

Then he again took up his ride, and it was not long before the outlaws listened in vain for the sound of his flight.

Before he stopped that night, Ted had covered another section of seventy-five miles, and he halted at a pretty, little hamlet environed by fertile meadows, framed in by mountain ranges.

Here he learned he would have a direct road to Benson, which was calculated to be about eighty miles distant.

Some thought it was not more than seventy miles.

And Ted, in his hopefulness, was inclined to accept the latter estimate.

"I shall find it long enough at that," he thought.

As his horses appeared to be in better trim than he had expected, he resolved to take an earlier start from this place than he had originally intended, in the hope of reaching Benson sooner than nine o'clock.

This part of his long ride was uneventful.

In the cool morning air of that important Friday he sped on past hamlet after hamlet, leaving the surprised inhabitants gazing long and curiously after him.

He continued to change horses often, and consulted his watch frequently, gaining courage every time.

He should be there as soon as he had planned—ay, earlier, if no accident befell him.

Earlier it was by two hours.

The town clock was striking seven when he rode over the bridge spanning the river, flowing beside this enterprising place.

"Well done, Bess, Captain!" he commented. "A better pair of horses never came into Benson."

He had good reasons for saying this.

Since Tuesday afternoon they had borne him, with the assistance of the bay, who had fallen by the way, fully four hundred and fifty miles.

The young rough rider had made a record that had never been beaten.

Fremont's ride of eight hundred miles in eight days, taking two for rest, was not its equal.

Neither was Aubrey's famous exploit performed by frequent changes of horses, stationed so he could have a fresh animal as often as he needed it.

Nor has history among its many historic riders given one to outdo it.

With a triumphant expression upon his handsome countenance, the young rough rider rode into this town, which he fondly believed was to prove the end of his long ride.

He had already seen the little station building, where a single-track road came into town.

He naturally concluded he would find the telegraph office there, and thither he hastened with what speed he could.

His appearance brought to the door half a dozen persons, who looked upon him with unfeigned wonder.

"Geewhiz!" ejaculated one, "I'll bet he's done some tall ridin' to get here."

"I want to see the operator," said Ted, springing to the ground, stiff and lame from his long drive, though still active.

"'Twon't do any good to see me," replied one of the crowd. "That is if you want to send a message. The wire's down, and it'll take till night to get it into shape."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RIDE THAT TOLD.

Nothing that the young rough rider had heard spoken since he had left Sosoon gave him such a shock as the simple statement of the operator in his matter-of-fact tone.

"Is there no line by which I can get a message through to Sacramento?"

"Not from Benson."

"It is a matter of life and death."

"I am sorry, but the line is completely useless here. Some one has been tampering with it, and the sheriff and his posse are out now hunting them down."

"That does not help me. When does the next train run out from this place?"

"Not till twelve o'clock. Oh! we are slow here."

"How far is it to the next station, where I would be likely to get the line?"

"I suppose Linmount would be about as near as any place. It is ten miles to that town."

"An hour's hard ride! Have you a good horse here in Benson?"

"I presume so, though none to boast on. You must have important business on hand."

Ted believed it would be good policy for him to make a confidant of the operator, so, leaving his horses to shift for themselves, he asked to see the man alone for a minute.

Accordingly the other led the way into his office and closed the door.

"You are Ted Strong, the young rough rider," he said. "I recognized you, but did not know as you would care to have your identity revealed to the crowd. What can I do for you?"

"You were very thoughtful, though it would not matter in this case. I must get a message through to the governor of the State or the sheriff of Sacramento. I should prefer the first."

"By jove!" exclaimed the operator, slapping his hands upon his knees, "you are in luck. That is, you would be if you were in Linmount, or could be forty minutes from now."

"Explain yourself in a few words. I feel as if a moment lost here meant a life."

"The train from Westburg to Sacramento runs through Linmount at a quarter of eight, and the governor will be on it bound for the capital."

"What time does the train reach Sacramento?"

"Ten o'clock, if it is on time. But more often it is from ten to fifteen minutes late."

"I must get to Linmount in season to catch that train."

"I do not wish to throw cold water on your hopes, but I doubt very much if you can do it."

"I must. I want to see the governor."

"There is no horse in Benson equal to that ride," replied the operator, positively.

"I believe mine are, though I have just come over four hundred miles in less than three days."

"Remarkable, sir, remarkable; never heard of its equal."

The young rough rider was already turning to the door.

"If jaded," he said, still thinking of his horses, "they are well seasoned to work. I cannot do better than to take them. Good-day."

"Good-day, Ted Strong," replied the operator, "and may you reach Linmount in season to save your friend. Wish I could help you more."

Ted was in the saddle of Black Bess before the man had finished his sentence.

Then, with the crowd gaping upon him in wonder, he dashed out of the town, and down the road leading to Linmount.

"It's too bad, Bess," he said to his mare. "I had hoped your work was done for this trip, but I must reach Linmount fifteen minutes before eight."

Overworked as the horses were, the young rough rider realized it was going to be a nip-and-tuck race to Linmount.

He knew that the chances were against him—more than they had been even during that longer ride from Sosoon.

It was now more a matter of endurance and speed than ever.

He pulled his watch from his pocket soon after leaving Benson, and he did not return it to its receptacle during the ten miles of riding.

He continued to change horses often, but he did not allow any respite for this—any stop. From the moment he rode out of Benson until he reached Linmount, there was not an instant's hesitation.

All the time the steeds were in motion.

He made his changes by springing from one saddle to the other, without checking their flight, while the pair raced side by side.

"It's life against life!" he cried to them; "you must win if it costs you your lives."

So, covered with foam, their sides reeking with sweat, their nostrils dripping with froth, the fleet steeds sped on, and on, and on!

It lacked but twenty minutes of eight.

Only five minutes were left.

How Ted would liked to have known how near he was to Linmount.

He judged it could not be two miles—he hoped not more than one.

But when it lacked but sixteen minutes of eight, and only a margin of sixty seconds was left, he began to lose heart.

He prayed now that the train might be late—five min utes, he felt, would turn the tide in his favor.

Hark! there sounds the whistle!

He is not in sight of the town, but he must be near!

Or did the track run close to the road for some distance before coming to the town?

It was a quarter of eight!

At that moment he came in sight of the town, lying almost at his feet!

A sudden turn in the road brought him in sight of the railroad station!

Also of the train!

The bell was ringing—the cars were moving out of the depot!

He was too late!

CHAPTER XII.

THE WELL-WON REPRIEVE.

The young rough rider, now riding Black Bess, waved his hand, and shouted for the train to stop.

But no one seemed to notice his wild approach.

Must he give up?

Never!

"On, faster, faster, Bess!" he shouted.

Thus, a man here and there springing excitedly out of his pathway, without checking the speed of his brave, black steed, now white and yellow with foam and dust, he rode upon the station platform.

The door to the baggage car was open.

There was no indication that the train was going to stop.

He resolved upon a bold, desperate venture.

Guiding Black Bess with unerring hand, he dashed madly toward the moving car.

Understanding what was required of her, the gallant mare raced alongside the swiftly moving train.

Reaching the baggage car, Ted sprang from her back straight through the open door of the car.

The train was now fairly under way, but it little mattered to the young rough rider, so long as he was a passenger.

"Never see the beat of that!" cried a bystander. "Went clean on board the car when she was moving. Must wanted to go bad."

"His hoss looks like he had ridden a long ride."

"And his other hoss looks jess as bad. The feller looked honest. I'll warrant you there's some big hunt afoot."

"These hosses ought to have good care. If they was my hosses I'd pay somebuddy good to look arter 'em. By crimpers! Joe Davy ain't one to let a good hoss want for care. I'm going to take these in."

So Bess and Captain were fortunate in the hands that cared for them, while their master was borne on toward Sacramento behind the iron horse.

The ordeal over, Ted Strong leaned against the side of the baggage car to recover something of his self-possession, knowing that he had accomplished his purpose.

The half dozen men in the car were too amazed to speak, except to utter exclamations of terror, and then of surprise.

"Can any of you tell me if the governor is on the train?" asked the young rough rider.

"He is," replied the baggage master. "But who in thunder are you, and where did you come from?"

"I will explain that later on. Just now I must see the governor."

"He is in the second car."

"Good! If you will kindly allow me to pass, I will soon return."

Ted then passed into the passenger car, and from the first to the second, where he found the governor reading the morning paper, and, it so happened, the particulars of the coming execution.

"Pardon me, governor," said the young rough rider, "but I have an important communication bearing upon that matter."

"Who are you, sir?" demanded that official, laying aside his paper.

In his terse manner Ted quickly informed the governor of his errand, and enough of his tremendous ride for that official to understand something of the effort he had put forth to save a friend.

"Zounds!" he cried; "you have well won a reprieve for your friend. Let me see this confession of Stoneman's. I know something of him, and I have heard of Dave Ansell, nothing to his good."

Then the governor critically examined the document handed him by the young rough rider, saying, at last:

"This is indeed sufficient cause for a delay in the execution. I am heartily glad of it, too. From what I have been able to learn, this Blake has not borne himself like a criminal."

"He is an innocent man," said Ted.

"You say you captured this Ansell, Mr. Strong?"

"Yes, your excellency; and if my plans do not miscarry, we will have him in Sacramento inside of ten days."

"You seem like a hustler, young man. I have heard of you, and am glad to meet you. Mr. Blake shall have a reprieve."

"Thank you, sir. I do not feel that I have made my long ride in vain. I suppose we ought to telegraph ahead at the first station we come to, that a reprieve is on the way."

"I agree with you. Yes, we will do so. In the meantime I will write a reprieve."

Then and there, with paper upon his knee, the governor of the great State of California wrote that reprieve which meant so much, and was a happy reward for the great undertaking of Ted Strong.

At the first station the governor himself sent a message to the sheriff to stay the execution until he could get there—that a reprieve was on the way.

With a light heart, the young rough rider seated himself in the car to enjoy a brief rest after his long and terrible ride.

Ted's great ride over, and his mission accomplished, nothing remains to be told, save a few words of explanation and description of the scenes that followed.

Arthur Blake was saved from the gallows, not only for that day, but for life. There was not even the necessity of a new trial, when the chief conspirator in the dark plot was put on trial for his life, as he was, in due course of time.

About ten days after the arrival of Ted at Benson, Ben, Bud and Miss Blake, with the little company of prisoners, reached the place.

They were a tired party of travelers, but all their hardships and vicissitudes were forgotten in the happy ending of their work.

"Jumpin' sandhills!" exclaimed Bud Morgan, "but that was a circus—half a dozen ground into one! The only poor thing about it was that Ted did all the work and left nothing fer the rest of us. But we might hev expected it, and we made our mistake when we let him go it alone."

"Could you help that, Bud?"

"Nary a help, so long's he got our hosses. Thet's the beginnin' of our mistake. But so long as it's Ted we won't stand out like b'ars. Th' best part for me is the fact thet the Captain was there."

"And never horse did better work, unless it was Black Bess," declared Ted.

"I shan't let you leave out Charley, who came limping into Hard Luck, and who is going to get over it in good shape," said Ben, good-naturedly.

Such was indeed the case, and the other two steeds already quite recovered from the effects of the long and trying experience, Arthur Blake safe and his sister happy, there were many reasons for rejoicing over the young rough rider's long ride.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 57, will contain "The Young Rough Rider's Silent Foe; or, The Hermit of Satan's Gulch." This story will tell of how a strange, but cunning man—a hermit—succeeded in keeping a valuable mine closed for several years, of ingenious devices he used to frighten away miners who attempted to work it, and of how Ted Strong, after facing serious dangers, finally brought the hermit to terms. The scene is laid in a part of the West heretofore not described in this library.

YOUNG ROUGH RIDERS WEEKLY

4—Ted Strong's Stratagem; or, Saving a Boy's Honor.
5—Ted Strong's Ride for Life; or, Caught in the Circle.
6—Ted Strong on the Trail; or, The Cattle Men of Salt Licks.
7—Ted Strong in Montana; or, Trouble at the Blackfoot Agency.
8—Ted Strong's Nerve; or, Wild West Sport at Black Mountain.
9—Ted Strong's Rival; or, The Cowboys of Sunset Ranch.
10—Ted Strong's Peril; or, Saved by a Girl.
11—Ted Strong's Gold Mine; or, The Duel at Rocky Ford.
12—Ted Strong's Lawsuit; or, Right Against Might.
13—Ted Strong's Railway Trip; or, An Unsolved Mystery.
14—Ted Strong's Mission; or, Taming a Tenderfoot.
15—Ted Strong's Might; or, The Cross Against the Sword.
16—Ted Strong's Puzzle; or, The Golden Mesa.
17—Ted Strong in the Chaparral; or, The Hunt at Las Animas.
18—Ted Strong's Forethought; or, King of the Mesa.
19—Ted Strong in the Land of Little Rain; or, Bud Morgan's Vengeance.
20—Ted Strong's Water Sign; or, In Shoshone Land.
21—Ted Strong's Steadiness; or, The Cattle Rustlers of Ceriso.
22—Ted Strong's Land Boom; or, The Rush for a Homestead.
23—Ted Strong's Indian Trap; or, Matching Craft with Craft.
24—Ted Strong's Signal; or, Racing with Death.
25—Ted Strong's Stamp Mill; or, The Woman in Black.
26—Ted Strong's Recruit; or, A Hidden Foe.
27—Ted Strong's Discovery; or, The Rival Miners.
28—Ted Strong's Chase; or, The Young Rough Riders on the Trail.
29—Ted Strong's Enemy; or, An Uninvited Guest.
30—Ted Strong's Triumph; or, The End of the Contest.
31—Ted Strong in Nebraska; or, The Trail to Fremont.
32—Ted Strong in Kansas City; or, The Last of the Herd.
33—The Rough Riders in Missouri; or, In the Hands of His Enemy.
34—The Young Rough Riders in St. Louis; or, The League of the Camorra.
35—The Young Rough Riders in Indiana; or, The Vengeance of the Camorra.
36—The Young Rough Riders in Chicago; or, Bud Morgan's Day Off.
37—The Young Rough Riders in Kansas; or, The Trail of the Outlaw.
38—The Young Rough Riders in the Rockies; or, Fighting in Mid Air.
39—The Young Rough Rider's Foray; or, The Mad Horse of Raven Hill.
40—The Young Rough Rider's Fight to the Death; or, The Mad Hermit of Bear's Hole.
41—The Young Rough Rider's Indian Trail; or, Okanaga, the Cheyenne.
42—The Young Rough Rider's Double; or, Unmasking a Sham.
43—The Young Rough Rider's Vendetta; or, The House of the Sorceress.
44—Ted Strong in Old Mexico; or, The Haunted Hacienda.
45—The Young Rough Rider in California; or, The Owls of San Pablo.
46—The Young Rough Rider's Silver Mine; or, The Texas Giant.
47—The Young Rough Rider's Wildest Ride; or, Cleaning Out a Whole Town.
48—The Young Rough Rider's Girl Guide; or, The Maid of the Mountains.
49—The Young Rough Rider's Handicap; or, Fighting the Mormon Kidnapers.
50—The Young Rough Rider's Daring Climb; or, The Treasure of Copper Crag.
51—The Young Rough Rider's Bitterest Foe; or, The Challenge of Capt. Nemo.
52—The Young Rough Rider's Great Play; or, The Mad Ally of a Villain.
53—The Young Rough Rider Trapped; or, A Villain's Desperate Play.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

383—Kidnaped in Broad Daylight; or, Nick Carter on His Own Trail.
384—The Little Giant's Double; or, The World's Two Strongest Men.
385—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks; or, The Confederated Criminal Trust.
386—When Aces Were Trumps; or, A Hard Game to Play.
387—The Gambler's Last Hand; or, The Little Giant Wins Out.
388—The Murder at Linden Fells; or, The Mystery of the Cadillac Needle.
389—Mercedes Danton's Double; or, A Plot for Many Millions.
390—The Millionaire's Nemesis; or, Paul Roger's Oath of Vengeance.
391—A Princess of the Underworld; or, The Mysterious Burglary at Lakeview.
392—A Queen of Her Kind; or, A Beautiful Woman's Nerve.
393—Isabel Benton's Trump Card; or, Desperate Play to Win.
394—A Princess of Hades; or, The Reappearance of Dazaar, the Fiend.
395—A Compact with Dazaar; or, The Devil Worshiper's Den.
396—In the Shadow of Dazaar; or, At the Mercy of Vampires.
397—The Crime of a Money-King; or, The Battle of the Magnates.
398—The Terrible Game of Millions; or, Tracking Down the Plotters.
399—A Dead Man's Power; or, The Mystery of a Telephone Number.
400—The Secrets of an Old House; or, The Crime of Washington Heights.
401—The House with the Open Door; or, The Double Crime of Madison Avenue.
402—The Society of Assassination; or, The Detective's Double Disguise.
403—The Brotherhood of the Crossed Swords; or, The Little Giant's Mighty Task.
404—The Trail of the Vampire; or, The Mysterious Crimes of Prospect Park.
405—The Demons of the Night; or, The Terrors of the Idol's Cavern.
406—The Captain of the Vampire; or, Smugglers of the Deep Sea.
407—A Bank President's Plot; or, Three Villains of a Stripe.
408—The Master Criminal; or, With the Devil in His Eye.
409—The Carruthers Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Best Disguise.
410—Inez, the Mysterious; or, The Master Criminal's Mascot.
411—The Criminal Queen's Oath; or, The Difference Between Two.
412—The Point of a Dagger; or, The Criminal Queen's Madness.
413—Doctor Quartz, the Second; or, The Great Freight Car Mystery.
414—Doctor Quartz, the Second, at Bay; or, A Man of Iron Nerve.
415—The Great Hotel Murders; or, Doctor Quartz's Quick Move.
416—Zanoni, the Woman Wizard; or, The Ward of Doctor Quartz.
417—The Woman Wizard's Hate; or, A Dangerous Foe.
418—The Prison Demon; or, The Ghost of Dr. Quartz.
419—Nick Carter and the Hangman's Noose; or, Dr. Quartz on Earth Again.
420—Dr. Quartz's Last Play; or, A Hand with a Royal Flush.
421—Zanoni, the Transfigured; or, Nick Carter's Phantom Mascot.
422—By Command of the Czar; or, Nick Carter's Boldest Defiance.
423—The Conspiracy of an Empire; or, Nick Carter's Bravest Act.
424—A Queen of Vengeance; or, Nick Carter's Beautiful Nemesis.
425—Daring Dan, the Human Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Smoothest Foe.
426—Dan Derrington's Double; or, Nick Carter's Terrible Test.
427—The Great Gold Swindle; or, The Little Giant's Masterpiece.
428—An East River Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Daring Leap.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

BRAVE AND BOLD

Contains the Biggest and Best Stories of All Descriptions. A Different Complete Story Each Week.

FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF THE LATEST ISSUES:

61—Backed by an Unknown; or, Dick Darrell's Hustle for a Living. By Cornelius Shea.
62—All Aboard; or, Life on the Lake. By Oliver Optic.
63—Phil, the Fiddler; or, The Story of a Young Street Musician. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
64—Dick Halladay's Pranks; or, Fun at Strykerville Academy. By W. L. James, Jr.
65—Slow and Sure; or, From the Street to the Shop. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
66—Little by Little; or, The Cruise of the *Flyaway*. By Oliver Optic.
67—Beyond the Frozen Seas; or, The Land of the Pigmies. By Cornelius Shea.
68—The Young Acrobat; or, The Great North American Circus. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
69—Saved from the Gallows; or, The Rescue of Charlie Armitage. By Matt Royal.
70—Checkmated by a Cadet; or, Conquered by Chance. By Harrie Irving Hancock.
71—Nuggets and Nerve; or, The Two Boy Miners. By Frank Sheridan.
72—Mile-a-Minute Tom; or, The Young Engineer of Pine Valley. By Cornelius Shea.
73—Seared With Iron; or, The Band of Skeleton Bar. By Cornelius Shea.
74—The Deuce and the King of Diamonds; or, Two Southern Boys in South Africa. By the author of "Among the Malays."
75—Now or Never; or, The Adventures of Bobby Bright. By Oliver Optic.
76—Blue-Blooded Ben; or, Two Princeton Pals. By the author of "Hal Larkin."
77—Checkered Trails; or, Under the Palmettoes. By Marline Manley.
78—Figures and Faith; or, Messenger Clinton's Chance. By the author of "The Hero of Ticonderoga."
79—The Trevalyn Bank Puzzle; or, The Face in the Locket. By Matt Royal.
80—The Athlete of Rossville; or, The Isle of Serpents. By Cornelius Shea.
81—Try Again; or, The Trials and Triumphs of Harry West. By Oliver Optic.
82—The Mysteries of Asia; or, Among the Komdafs. By Cornelius Shea.
83—The Frozen Head; or, Puzzling the Police. By Paul Rand.
84—Dick Danforth's Death Charm; or, Lost in the South Seas. By the author of "The Wreck of the *Glaucus*."
85—Burt Allen's Trial; or, Why the Safe was Robbed. By W. A. Parcelle.
86—Prisoners of War; or, Jack Dashaway's Rise from the Ranks. By "Old Tecumseh."
87—A Charmed Life; or, The Boy with the Snake Skin Belt. By the author of "Among the Malays."
88—Only an Irish Boy; or, Andy Burke's Fortunes. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
89—The Key to the Cipher; or, The Boy Actor's Struggle. By Frank J. Earll.
90—Through Thick and Thin; or, Foes to the Last. By Walter J. Newton.
91—In Russia's Power; or, How Two Boys Outwitted the Czar. By Matt Royal.
92—Jonah Mudd, the Mascot of Hoodooville; or, Which Was Which? By Fred Thorpe.
93—Fighting the Seminoles; or, Harry Emerson's Red Friend. By Maj. Herbert H. Clyde.
94—The Young Outlaw; or, Adrift in the Streets. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
95—The Pass of Ghosts; or, A Yankee Boy in the Far West. By Cornelius Shea.
96—The Fortunes of a Foundling; or, Dick, the Outcast. By Ralph Ranger.
97—The Hunt for the Talisman; or, The Fortunes of the Gold Grab Mine. By J. M. Merrill.
98—Mystic Island. The Tale of a Hidden Treasure. By the author of "The Wreck of the *Glaucus*."
99—Capt. Startle; or, The Terror of the Black Range. By Cornelius Shea.
100—Julius, the Street Boy; or, A Waif's Rise from Poverty. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
101—Shanghaied; or, A Wanderer Against His Will. By H. C. Emmet.
102—Luke Jepson's Treachery; or, The Dwarfs of the Pacific. By the author of "The Wreck of the *Glaucus*."
103—Tangled Trails; or, The Mystery of the Manville Fortune. By Clifford Park.
104—James, Langley & Co.; or, The Boy Miners of Salt River. By the author of "Capt. Startle."
105—Ben Barclay's Courage; or, The Fortunes of a Store Boy. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
106—Fred Desmond's Mission; or, The Cruise of the "Explorer." By Cornelius Shea.
107—Tom Pinkney's Fortune; or, Around the World with Nellie Bly. By Lieut. Clyde.
108—Detective Clinket's Investigations; or, The Mystery of the Severed Hand. By Clifford Park.
109—In the Depths of the Dark Continent; or, The Vengeance of Van Vincent. By the author of "The Wreck of the 'Glaucus.'"
110—Barr, the Detective; or, The Peril of Lucy Graves. By Thomas P. Montfort.
111—A Bandit of Costa Rica; or, The Story of a Stranded Circus. By Cornelius Shea.
112—Dacey Dearborn's Difficulties; or, The Struggle of the Rival Detectives. By Clifford Park.
113—Ben Folsom's Courage; or, How Pluck Won Out. By Fred Thorpe.
114—Daring Dick Goodloe's Apprenticeship; or, The Fortunes of a Young Newspaper Reporter. By Phil Willoughby.
115—Bowery Bill, the Wharf Rat; or, The Young Street Arab's Vow. By Ed. S. Wheeler.
116—A Fight for a Sweetheart; or, The Romance of Young Dave Mansard. By Cornelius Shea.
117—Col. Mysteria; or, The Tracking of a Criminal to His Grave. By Launce Poyntz.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents per copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, NEW YORK

YOUNG ROVER LIBRARY

Adventures of THE AMERICAN HARKAWAY

THE unflagging interest taken in the fortunes of the immortal Jack Harkaway by young boys, and old boys as well, has for thirty years been one of the marvels of the publishing world. These stories seem to be just as eagerly sought after and devoured to-day as when first issued, and myriads of readers **Idolize the Bold and Unconquered Jack** in much the same spirit as they do good old Robinson Crusoe. In fact it has become a household name. And yet, there has always been something like a spirit of keen disappointment among American lads because this hero happened to be a Britisher. At last believing the time is ripe to remedy this one defect, we now take pleasure in presenting a new series, in which, from week to week will be chronicled the wonderful adventures and madcap pranks of a genuine Yankee lad, who certainly bids fair to out-Harkaway the famous original of this type. In the energetic and restless Link Rover a unique character has been created, so bold and striking that we confidently expect his name to presently become quite as familiar among our American boys as those of Frank Merriwell or Buffalo Bill. These **Stories of Adventure and Frolic** at school and abroad are written especially for this series by Gale Richards, who is under exclusive contract to devote his whole time and attention to this fascinating work. There is not a dull line from beginning to end, because Link Rover believes it is his especial duty and privilege to keep things constantly "humming." So be fairly warned that to commence reading of his strange experiences is to acquire the "Rover habit," which clings to one like a leech and is very hard to shake off.

Following is a list of the numbers already issued or in press:

1—Link Rover, the Scapegrace; or, The Black Sheep of the Family.
2—Link Rover at School Abroad; or, Lively Times at Old Swindon.
3—Link Rover as a Wizard; or, The Yankee Firebrand in an English School.
4—Link Rover's Balloon Voyage; or, Fun and Adventure Among the Clouds.
5—Link Rover Among the Carlists; or, Playing a Bold Game with the Dons.
6—Link Rover Adrift; or, Pranks and Perils on the Mediterranean.
7—Link Rover in Algiers; or, Waking Up a Sleepy Oriental City.
8—Link Rover's Strange Legacy; or, The Audacious Lark at Malta.
9—Link Rover's Chase; or, A Yankee Innocent Along the Nile.
10—Link Rover's Menagerie; or, Lively Times with the Scapegrace.
11—Link Rover, the Wonder-Worker; or, Surprising the Hindoo Jugglers.
12—Link Rover's Jumping Idol; or, Mad Pranks in a Chinese Temple.
13—Link Rover's Pirate Junk; or, The Strange Cruise of the *Howling Ghost.*
14—Link Rover in America; or, In Search of Fun at the "Golden Gate."
15—Link Rover's Wager; or, Mixing Them Up on the Limited.
16—Link Rover Among the Mormons; or, A Madcap Frolic in Old Salt Lake City.
17—Link Rover's Warning; or, The Ghastly Sell on Sheriff Bowie.
18—Link Rover's Glorious Lark; or, Making a Holy Show of the Train Robbers.
19—Link Rover Stranded; or, Finding Fun on the Road.
20—Link Rover's Camp Fires; or, A Jolly Journey with the Hoboes.
21—Link Rover on Guard; or, Tricks Played on Travelers.
22—Link Rover's Discovery; or, A Very Hot Time at Denver.
23—Link Rover Trapped; or, The Bursting of a Bubble.
24—Link Rover and the Money Makers; or, Something Not Down on the Bills.
25—Link Rover in Chicago; or, Making Things Fairly Hum.
26—Link Rover's Strategy; or, Smoking Out an Old Enemy.
27—Link Rover Among the Shanty Boatmen; or, A Roaring Voyage Down the Mississippi.
28—Link Rover's Flying Wedge; or, Football Tactics on a River Steamboat.
29—Link Rover's Crusoe Island; or, A Campaign of Humor in the Flood.
30—Link Rover's Surprise; or, The Mischief to Pay.
31—Link Rover Among the Cotton Pickers; or, Hustling for Fun Down in Dixie Land.
32—Link Rover's Tame Scarecrow; or, The Astounding Racket "Daddy" Played.

A new number every week. Price, FIVE CENTS, at all newsdealers, or by sending direct to the publishers.

STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York

BE A ROOTER

Root For a Record in the National Game and for Tip Top Prizes

TIP TOP'S NATIONAL

BASE BALL CONTEST

Do You Want to Try for the Pennant?
Do You Want a Fine Outfit for Your Team?
Do You Want to Score High in the National Game?

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE

Root for the Famous Tip Top Prizes and Pennant

PLAY BALL

Watch Every Number for Further Announcements

University of South Florida
Digital Commons @ University of South Florida

DIGITAL COMMONS
@ UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Young Rough Riders Weekly

Dime Novel Collections

May 1905

The young rough rider's long ride, or, Life against life

Edward C. Taylor

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/young_rough_riders

Recommended Citation
Taylor, Edward C., "The young rough rider's long ride, or, Life against life" (1905). *Young Rough Riders Weekly*. 7.
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/young_rough_riders/7

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Dime Novel Collections at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Young Rough Riders Weekly by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.